

ESSAYS

ON SEVERAL

RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS,

CHIEFLY TENDING TO ILLUSTRATE

THE

SCRIPTURE-DOCTRINE

OF THE

INFLUENCE

OF THE

HOLY SPIRIT.

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KINGSTON UPON HULL.

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O F F I C I A L

RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS

CLASSIFYING THE SUBJECTS

THE

SCRIPTURE-DOCTRINE

OF THE

INFLUENCE



N O 1 1 T

BY JOSEPH MILLER A.M.

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P R E F A C E.

*T*HE two first Essays were written before the Author knew any thing of the notice, which Mr. Ludlam has been pleased to take of him, in the last of his Theological Essays, concerning the Influence of the Holy Spirit. They seem to be no improper introduction to the tracts, which bear a more immediate reference to the publications of that Gentleman. There are many who scarce know at all, what are the sentiments of those whom the world is pleased to call Enthusiasts. The first Essay is calculated for their information; and if the second in any measure guard the Reader against the decisions of a very partial Tribunal, he will be prepared for the perusal of the following Essays, which are all occasioned by Mr. Ludlam's Theological pieces.

I have attempted as much as possible to avoid the appearance of controversy, and to explain my own views in such a manner,

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as though that Gentleman had written nothing; both because the formal method of disputation is tedious and uninteresting to many readers, and because the direct vindication of truth is itself the best confutation of error. The attentive Reader will see, however, that I have all along had a steady eye on his sentiments, and that there is nothing material in his objections to my views, but what is attempted at least to be fully obviated. Personal resentment can scarce be supposed to exist against an Author, who has certainly avoided all personal abuse; and my concern for the reputation of a former work,* attacked by him in some of its most important views, is, I hope, a small thing with me, compared with the magnitude of the truths I undertake to defend, the real glory of God, the best interests of men, and the preciousness of vital Christianity, which in no age was ever more speciously undermined than in the present.

* Gibbon's Account of Christianity considered.



ESSAY I.

THE CHARACTER OF * METHODISM.

WHATEVER differences of opinion in religion may prevail in the world, all who allow the necessity of any religion at all, agree to acknowledge, that nothing in the world is so important in its nature, and so interesting in its effects to mankind. On this account every religious phænomenon of any remarkable

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* The word METHODIST was first applied to some young men, in the University of Oxford, who began to distinguish themselves about the year 1730, by an extraordinary attention to devotional duties. The name has since been extended to great numbers of the regular Clergy and members of the established church. The Author is far from intending to legitimate a term which the persons, to whose religious opinions and conduct it is thus applied, may consider as reproachful and abusive. He uses it merely to avoid ambiguity and the necessity of circumlocution.

remarkable influence and duration, which comes within our reach, demands the attention of serious minds; its nature and principles ought to be studied and impartially examined; that we may reap the benefit of it, if good, and avoid its snares, if evil.

If such appearances spread themselves within the circle of our acquaintance and connections, we seem to have a peculiar call for the discharge of this duty. The supine indifference and contemptuous unbelief of Antoninus, and other renowned Sages, with respect to Christianity, do surely form no commendable parts of their character.

Methodism, commonly so called, it must be owned, is a very extraordinary phenomenon of this kind. For upwards of forty years it has spread, it has triumphed through the land; it has been assaulted, partly by persecution, (so much at least as the liberal spirit of the times would admit) and partly by railery and ridicule. The first is an odious, the second a dangerous weapon. Argument is surely the proper method, if any be proper, of opposing it. But though some attempts of
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this sort have been made, it is evident that many, at least, who have used this method, have had very little acquaintance with their subject. They have contented themselves with common report, ill-grounded stories, half-views, and indistinct descriptions; and from these they have formed a crude indigested idea of Methodism, as a compound of gloom and absurdity, and weakly attacked, with some plausible flourishes of reason, what in fact they did not understand.

It is obvious to any impartial inquirer, that the principles of these religionists are in every thing material, no other than what the articles and liturgy of the Church of England contain. And it is as certain, that the same principles were held by the Scotch and English Presbyterians, at a time in which the members of the Establishment itself were insensibly declining from their own principles. It is needless to add for the information of any who are acquainted with the History of the Reformation, that all the Protestant Churches abroad agreed, almost in every re-

spect, *altogether* in *every fundamental doctrine* with the Church of England.

If any therefore have been led to suppose that the Parochial Clergy, who are called Methodistical, have introduced *novel opinions*, they ought to know, that no mistake can be more absurd. The fashionable opinions which are supported from pulpits, not suspected of Methodism, are doubtless of a more novel nature. Not that this consideration proves either of them to be right or wrong. Only it seemed necessary to be taken notice of, in order to ascertain the true character of the serious religion revived of late years, and clear it from the unjust charge of novelty.

I would now lay before the reader a succinct view of the peculiar doctrines, which these men hold as absolutely necessary to salvation. They may, I think, be reduced to four.

I. They are unanimous in believing the necessity of a divine light, inspiration,* or illumination

* The present age seems to have a peculiar prejudice against this term. So far as this prejudice arises from misapprehension, it falls within the design of this essay to obviate

lumination, in order to understand, to relish, and to practise true Christianity. This is a distinguishing character of Methodism. If any one maintain that the Gospel is an easy plain system, obvious to all men, that the exercise of our natural understanding upon the written word, will enable any man to understand all that is necessary to be known, and that every man has resources within himself sufficient to lead him to the discharge of his duty to God and man, no one would suspect such an one of Methodism, even though he should admit a confused and indeterminate notion of the assistances of the Holy Spirit vouchsafed to all mankind. It is easily seen, that this means little or nothing in practice, though it may seem to mean something in theory. But should any assert, that whatever

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might

obviate it. It is proper then to add here, that these men do not by this word mean any miraculous influence, such as obtained in the apostolic age, but only an ordinary sanctifying influence, such as is beautifully expressed in a well-known Collect. "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit; that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name, through Christ our Lord."

might have been man's original state, he is at present so circumstanced as to need a divine illumination, perfectly distinct from all the knowledge which his natural powers can give him, that he himself is palpably sensible of his natural darkness with respect to divine things, and has been introduced into a new world of knowledge by a divine light, which he is sure is divine, because he feels himself entirely inadequate to the work, the world would immediately look on him as involved in the very gulph of Methodism.

It is, however, but justice to the serious believer of this doctrine to observe, that he does not expect this illumination in any way inconsistent with the use of rational and prudent means. He prays, he searches the scriptures, he meditates, he exerts all his natural faculties to the utmost, he guards against presumption, sloth, and licentiousness. Yet he dares not expect the desired effects from any means, as such; but, in the use of them, he looks for divine illumination. If he professes to have attained any true scriptural light, he

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is convinced that he owes it to the Spirit of Truth,* and not to the light of reason, however strenuously exercised on the Scriptures, though at the same time he knows nothing but what is purely scriptural. If you tell him that you understand the Scriptures with great ease, in all things which concern salvation, without any such influence, he will frankly give you his opinion, supported by copious quotations of Scripture, that nothing can be a clearer evidence that you are not a real possessor of one single evangelical sentiment, but have deceived yourself entirely.

II.

* Should any ask, how this can afford a solid ground for so important a conclusion, they are desired to observe, that as these religionists profess to believe and feel themselves by nature "carnal, sold under sin" [See their second fundamental doctrine] they must of course ascribe all their good affections and views to the Holy Spirit altogether, and are therefore not at all concerned with the question, how the operations of the Spirit are distinguishable from the emotions of our own minds, a question it is owned very interesting to those who believe the moral capacity of man to excite virtuous dispositions and affections in himself.

II. Another thing in which they are unanimous, relates to the well-known doctrine of *original sin*. This they not only hold with undeviating firmness, as many called orthodox Divines, not suspected of Methodism do, but they profess to feel it *experimentally*. A sincere humiliation of soul arising from a view of their depraved nature, a conviction of sin as infinitely evil, a total despair of salvation from themselves, a renunciation of all dependance on human righteousness, and a view of the divine justice and purity, remarkably distinct from that of other religionists; these are the lights in which original sin appears to them, and these are the sensations which it excites in their minds.

It may be observed here, as a striking peculiarity of these persons, that in this they reduce all mankind to a level, and make no distinction between men of decent and those of scandalous characters. All must feel this doctrine with power; and however the various degrees of guilt may expose men to various degrees of the divine displeasure, yet the condition of guilt to the degree that has been stated,

stated, must, they apprehend, be distinctly felt in the conscience of every man who means to be a Christian indeed.

III. *Justification by faith in the merits of Christ* is another of their doctrines. The idea is *forensic*, and the view of God exhibited in it is that of a Governor, at once infinitely perfect in justice and in mercy; in justice, because he inflicts the whole punishment due for the sins of men on his only begotten Son; and in mercy, because he himself has provided and accepted the ransom, and bestows the blessings of pardon and salvation on every believer, *without money and without price*. But to describe more exactly the character of these persons, it is necessary to add, that they are by no means content with general ideas of this subject, however accurate and clear; they hold the necessity of *feeling* it. A true Christian, with them, is one in whose conscience the judicial ideas which relate to justification, have been realized by the energy of the Divine Spirit. He has felt all the condemnation of the last article, and is in his own eyes polluted and guilty, helpless and miserable.

miserable. The blood of Christ has been sprinkled on his conscience, and has given him peace in believing. The great transaction of the Cross is appropriated. God Almighty calls him to enter into a covenant with himself on the strength of the ineffably meritorious sacrifice there offered once for all. He *hears*, he *believes*, he *comes* to God; he receives his pardon, he rejoices in his reconciled God; Salvation is his, he is a new creature, and enters into a new state, attended with prospects and obligations totally distinct from those of any other religionists under the sun, all which are supposed obviously and naturally to grow out of that relation to God, in which the experience of this doctrine has fixed him.

IV. Closely connected with this is the doctrine of a *spiritual renovation*. They will by no means allow the reformed rake to be necessarily a real convert, because such a reformation may, and often is effected by selfish views and motives. And they suppose nothing to be more common than for decent manners to exist, without the least holiness of heart.

heart. They are peculiarly careful in fixing with precision the motive of all virtue. Allowing a subordinate use of other motives, they are peremptory in insisting on the necessity of divine Love. An obedience extorted by terror, or allured merely by interest, is not with them the *Christian obedience*. Justified by faith, renewed in his faculties, and constrained by the love of Christ, their believer moves in the sphere of love and gratitude, and all his duties flow, more or less, from this principle. And though they are accumulating for him in heaven a treasure of bliss proportioned to his faithfulness and activity, and it is by no means inconsistent with his principles to feel the force of this consideration, yet love itself sweetens every duty to his mind; and he thinks there is no absurdity in his *feeling* the love of God as the grand commanding principle of his life. If you call this enthusiasm, he tells you, if love be real, it may be felt; and asks you, how you know you love an human friend, intimating to you his suspicion of your total want of the love of God, because you ridicule the sensation itself.

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He allows the necessity both of a renewal of human nature, and also of the removal of that capital obstruction, guilt, according to the last article, in order to give fair room and scope for the exertion of this principle of love. Its moral effects, he will tell you, reach to every act of duty, and while they provide for every external decency of manners, are principally concerned in the regulation of the heart.

These are the lineaments of Methodism, so called. If any thing be wanting still to complete the idea, we may compare this religionist, a moment, with three other characters very common in this nation. He will appear a perfect contrast to them all.

The Deist or Freethinker moves in the regions of licentious speculation, dissolute and careless; not only unawed by creeds and systems of man's invention, but by all the light and evidences of Scripture, and allows no guide of duty or religion, but the dim light of nature. His *forté* however is a sceptical looseness of mind, by which, under the idea
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of exemption from bigotry, he has, generally speaking, no determinate principles at all.

The Socinian has selected some moral branches of Christianity, especially such as the Deist is least inclined to condemn; and while he looks on Jesus as the teacher and exemplar of these precepts, he rejects whatever carries the air of mystery, as either not contained in the Scriptures, or, if contained there, yet capable of being explained away and reduced to the insignificance of an Eastern hyperbole or mere allusion.

The line of distinction between these two characters is flimsy. The infidelity of the former is more daring, that of the latter more inconsistent. But every ordinary orthodox Divine will join issue with our religionist, in asserting that both are extremely abhorrent from the whole plan of Christianity.

If the merely orthodox Divine be compared with him, the appearance of inconsistency is not so bold and glaring indeed as that of the Socinian, but no less real. While his morality flows chiefly from common natural notions, and contracts no peculiar tincture

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from Christian principles, his views of the Trinity, of the atonement of Jesus, and of the assistances of the Divine Spirit, naked as they are and merely speculative, expose him to the accusation of maintaining useless mysteries.

magna professis

Purpureus latè qui splendeat unus & alter
Assuitur pannus. HOR.

Thus while the substance of his dissertations is spun from a fleece, which he possesses in common with Deists and Socinians, he embellishes his work with a slight view of Christian mystery, of a texture evidently distinct from all the rest, *splendid* indeed, but useless in its present connection, and unattended with any moral influence either in his doctrine or in his experience. As our religionist, on the other hand, makes Christian mysteries *his all* in doctrine, it may be thought as fair to charge him with enthusiasm, as the other with inconsistency. However he is certainly

Simplex duntaxat & unum.

His views of morality flow purely from his
doctrine :

doctrine : revealed religion he assumes as the whole of his argument : and if he errs at all, it must be, because he misunderstands the plan of Scripture. He professes to see a consistent scheme of doctrine revealed in it ; and if you confute him effectually, it must not be done by vague indistinct charges of Enthusiasm, but by a regular and accurate process of scriptural investigation, a task more painful and arduous, but surely more liberal and more worthy of rational creatures than that indistinct declamatory censure, with which many pretended advocates of reason, good sense, and moderation, have treated him.

Whoever is desirous of entering on a work of rational confutation, will doubtless desire to gain a true insight into the plan which he means to oppose. To this end he will find it not amiss to peruse Maclaurin's * Sermons and Essays, or Dr. Witherspoon's Essays ; or, if he would see the severe spirit of reasoning tempered with the graces of Poetry, Gambold's Tragedy of Ignatius. And I dare promise him, that if this short sketch has not

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supplied

* Brother to the celebrated Mathematician of that name.

supplied him with a sufficiency of materials, the authors now mentioned will amply satisfy his demand.

As to the great question, **WHERE IS TRUTH?** every believer of Scripture will own, without hesitation, that the Bible alone must determine it. No candid observer, it is presumed, after a fair examination, will deny, that the religious views here stated have a consistency of plan, and unity of design. But to many they will still appear the essence of Enthusiasm. There is a plan, it will be said, but it is the madman's *cum ratione insanire*. Perhaps the force of this prejudice might be abated, did we consider, that Christianity is a Science full and complete in all its parts, and incapable of receiving any additional improvement from modern discoveries, because it was published by God himself; and the character of his works is, according to the wise man, that *whatsoever he doth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it*.^{*} It ought then to be proved, that the Scripture points out a distant age of much
rational

^{*} ECCLESIAS. iii. 14.

rational improvement, like the present, as essentially contributing to instruct us in Divinity, before men lay the least stress on such a consideration. The case of Divinity is evidently different from that of all other Sciences. Repeated experiments, a gradual increase of cultivation, and many seemingly fortuitous circumstances, are usually necessary to bring these to perfection. But Christianity was the product of divine wisdom, and introduced into the world at once in its full vigour and maturity. We have only to attend to the means of instruction, which itself lays down: and if we have there no intimations of any accessions of light from future discoveries in other branches of science, it seems a boldness, not very justifiable, to suppose what can never be proved. Be it so, that the Ancients were mere Pigmyes, compared with ourselves, in natural Philosophy, Mathematics, and many other branches of science: it is easily conceivable, that the pride of the Moderns may be fed by the idea, till they be reduced to a state of mind extremely unfavourable to the investigation of religious truth, and therefore

be apt to call that Enthusiasm, which is not so. But while Divinity stands aloof from all other Sciences, and must be considered as the property of the *Vulgar*, no less than of the *Philosopher*, the importance of modern improvements in other sciences, must be thrown out of the account, whenever we would calculate what sort of men are most likely to understand Christianity. We must form our judgment on this head from what the Scriptures say, and these are very contrary to man's ideas in the case.

To study the Scriptures themselves, and thence to see with our own eyes, how far this plan of religion may, or may not be proved to be true Christianity, is then the proper practical inference to be deduced from the subject before us. Indeed one important rule of Scripture, "by their fruits ye shall know them," suggests to us another touchstone. No religionists, I own, appear to me in any respect their equals in piety and virtue. But every man must judge in this for himself.

And perhaps another question, though of subordinate use, may be decided from the foregoing

foregoing considerations, whether a man who means to be pious and virtuous in good earnest, however studiously detached from party, can in our days escape the character of a Methodist. And if it should be found that he cannot, the Methodists, not any particular body of People exclusively, but those of whatever denomination, who follow the principles explained in this essay, and to whom that name is given by the world, may be found to be the same sort of people and no other, who, in the times of Nero and Domitian, were persecuted by the name of *Christians*.

ESSAY

E S S A Y II.

THE TREATMENT WHICH METHODISM, SO CALLED, HAS RECEIVED FROM THE CRITICAL AND MONTHLY REVIEWERS.

THE writer of the foregoing Essay has taken no pains to conceal his own predilection for the system of religious views, which he has considered. Indeed he values not that fashionable ambiguity of language, by which so many writers endeavour to insinuate their sentiments into the breasts of their readers, without ever explicitly owning them.

He thinks proper to add here, that without undertaking to judge others, who in a greater or less degree dissent from the Church of England, he cordially adheres to the established Communion; and he believes that this is generally the case of those Clergymen, whom the world calls Methodists, though they hold nothing in religion distinct from the doctrines of the Church.*

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* It is well known that the name is given them merely on account of their zealous adherence to the doctrinal articles of the Church of England,

He is very sensible, however, of the extreme disadvantage under which he labours, in attempting to procure a favourable hearing from the public. He has seen, with concern, the rapid growth of profaneness and licentiousness, both in principles and practice, under the influence of Anti-Methodistical sentiments; and as he firmly believes, that the doctrines stigmatized by an odious name are scriptural, and alone productive of true holiness of heart and life, he must be inconsistent with himself and destitute of charity, if he do not desire that others may embrace them. To the middle and lower ranks of people we have some access by the Pulpit, and we can truly testify, that our labours are not in vain. But how shall the learned, the genteel, and the higher ranks be addressed? They will not hear us; and the Critical and Monthly Reviewers will not permit them to read us. It is well known that these men exercise no candour towards what is called Methodism. With them it is ever wild, fantastic, visionary. Many of their readers take it for granted, that it is so, on their ipse dixit; and hence the
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real religion of Jesus is condemned, unheard and unknown.

I certainly must be understood to pay the Reviewers a compliment by this representation. That in the Republic of letters their decisions should be so much regarded, must have been the consequence of a degree at least of literary merit. In fact, I mean not to deny the extent and precision of their knowledge, perhaps in all subjects, except theology. In that, passion and prejudice have certainly jaundiced their understandings. The decline from the principles of the Reformation has been general in the kingdom ever since the Restoration. Its real doctrines are despised as fanatical and sectarian; and the Reviewers, at the same time that they themselves are carried away by the general torrent, do aid its progress, and facilitate its course. I must therefore beg the Publick to examine fairly and candidly for themselves the account which has been given of Methodism, without in the least regarding those who know not how to shew it any mercy.

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Though I am far from being sanguine in my expectations of any great effects from the writings of so obscure a person as myself, I shall venture to intimate to both these sets of men, that justice and candour would require them and their favourite writers, who join with them in inveighing against these religionists, if they undertake at all to criticize their writings, to give us something more than the constant repetition of Enthusiasm, Bigotry, and the like. Let the views of the writers be fairly laid open, let the publick know what it is they really hold; and if it be absurd or unscriptural, let them come forth in a manly and liberal manner, and by solid argument confute it. Ill-natured witticisms, oblique hints, and general invective, require very little either of understanding, or of attention to manage them. They have now before them the real out-lines of what is commonly called Methodism. For be it still understood, that I have only used that word all along in compliance with custom. There is in the nature of the thing no necessity, that real Christianity should in this age have a particular

ticular name assigned to it. I have not made it my business to prove at large the principles from Scripture. This has often been done by Methodistical writers. I have only stated what they really are, and endeavoured to exhibit them, unfullied with the dirt of obloquy, with which it has been so fashionable to asperse them.

Let the Reviewers prove, if they can, the four leading doctrines of Methodism to be unscriptural. To say that they are not rational, is, at best, to say something so ambiguous, that nothing is decided by it. Let the controversial ground which Methodism stands on be accurately ascertained. It is not infidel, but Christian ground. The Scriptures must, in the first place, be taken for granted as divinely inspired, and it must be believed to be a rational thing to abide by their authority. If the Reviewers will not allow this, the whole face of the controversy is altered. The Christian oracles have been demonstrated to be of divine original, before they or the name of Methodism had any existence. If this simple postulatum be admitted,

ted, the opposers of Methodism ought to examine the genius and spirit of the Scriptures, their evident design and tendency, on the whole; and from such an examination to educe doctrinal views quite inconsistent with Methodism; to prove that its leading doctrines will not stand the test of Scripture, and that therefore they are not rational, because not consonant to the word of God, to which it is a most rational thing to give our assent.

And it will not be thought by reasonable persons an unfair thing, to call upon these men to make good the heavy charges of ignorance, fanaticism, and bigotry, which for many years they have vented against Methodism. To them it has seemed like lawful Game, which they might hunt down at pleasure. It really puts one in mind of the rancorous terms, in which Tacitus speaks of the primitive Christians, and of a sentence of our Divine Master, still more worthy to be remembered, "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." LUKE xxi. 17.

Should the Reviewers or any of their friends use this method of opposing Methodism.

dism, I greatly hope that God in his Providence will raise up those, who shall be enabled to vindicate his truths. At any rate a sober, temperate, and manly discussion of these subjects will be attended with some useful fruit, and may serve to rouse the attention of the higher ranks of mankind to serious Christianity, with which they can by no means be said at present to be over-burdened.

I have nothing to add, but to point out two or three specimens of the manner in which the Reviewers usually treat the Methodistical writers. I have selected four, one of which at least is conveyed in a more than ordinary tone of moderation. "Such writers as Mr. Adam and others, the followers of William Law, Hervey, and the rest of those good Mystics, whose private characters we revere, while we cannot, as friends to rational religion, but disapprove their sentiments." This is part of the Critique of the Monthly Review for October 1787, on Mr. Adam's Posthumous Works. Rational Religion! this is the usual *cant* of these men. What do they mean by the term rational?

rational? Whatever they mean by it, we are, I suppose, to understand that Mr. A. is a friend to irrational religion. Is it that he maintains any thing directly contrary to common sense? They have not given us an instance of the kind. Is it that his doctrinal views contain things above the common notices of natural reason, and such as she would never discover, abstracted from the light of Scripture? It is not irrational to hold such views, if they be consonant to "that foolishness of God," "which is wiser than Men." 1. COR. i. 25. Is it that his sentiments may not be rationally inferred from the Scriptures? Let it appear so, "make your vaunting true." In truth it is high time, that the Publick should be apprized of the childish affectation in religion, which this vague term has introduced; and I have only to wish that some persons, whose character would attract more attention from the world than can be expected from obscurity like mine, would expose it as it deserves. When, for instance, one party of men call themselves *rational* dissenters, what else do they

say to their other dissenting brethren than this, stand aloof, ye wrong-headed fanatics, we are the wise men? The term *orthodox* has been sufficiently derided by these same rationalists; yet compared with theirs it is a modest term. It only implies that their opponents think wrong. Whereas these rational men say, in effect, that their adversaries are so destitute of reason as to be incapable of thinking right.

As I would neither flatter nor fear these men, so I should be very sorry to traduce or misrepresent them. I own that the want of candour, which I expose in them, does not always affect the personal characters of Methodistical authors, though it never fails to affect their tenets. At the same time that they speak so handsomely of the *man* in the article before us, it were to be wished that they had enabled their readers to have formed some judgment of the sentiments of the *Author*. The thoughts of a sensible man, as they candidly allow Mr. A. to be, must surely deserve some attention. They felt, I suppose, a violent antipathy to his views, and
so

so dismissed them at once as irrational. Such a procedure can prove nothing but their own want of taste for his writings, just as Lord Chesterfield's contemptuous treatment of Epic Poetry can only evince, that his soul was not formed for the sublime in composition.

A remarkable mistake made by the last-mentioned writer in his letters concerning Achilles, shews, at once, his prejudice against Homer, and his ignorance of his writings. He thinks it absurd in the Poet to represent the Hero in so meritorious a light, because he was invulnerable. Who told him so? Some scrap of information, I suppose, derived from a Dictionary; not Homer, to be sure, who never represents Achilles as invulnerable, and who would never have provided him with Vulcanian armour, had he meant to exhibit him as such. It is thus that carelessness or ignorance will ever misrepresent persons and things. I am going to give a similar mistake of the Reviewers, with respect to Mr. A. He is, it seems, a follower of W. Law. I have that opinion of their good sense, as to believe,

that had they attended so much to Mr. A. as to know his real sentiments, (I must suppose them acquainted with those of Mr. Law) they would have acknowledged him to have been not only no follower of Law, but rather directly opposite to him. A careful perusal of one or two of his sermons might have convinced them of this, even if we had not the following express testimony of Mr. A. himself in his Thoughts on religion, P. 49. VOL. I. " Setting aside St. Paul, I should think Mr. Law right in his notion of regeneration; but when I look into the Scriptures, I am sure he is wrong." In truth, the Guelphs and Gibellines were not more opposite during the Papal contentions in Italy, than Mr. Adam and Mr. Law in their sentiments of religion.

But thus it is, that the Methodistical writers are treated. They are associated with persons with whom they have not the least connection, held up in a ludicrous light, and remain equally unknown to the Reviewers, and to their Readers. Nor can I expect that these writers will be differently treated,

treated, till their enemies learn, that it is a rational thing to feel the love of God in their hearts, and be less devoted to a scheme of religion, so very rational, as Bp. Butler intimates, in his excellent Sermon on the love of God, as to have nothing to do with the affections.

In the Monthly Review for Sept. 1787, on "Mr. Newton's Messiah," much real piety is allowed in the close of the article to be contained in the book, and yet the greatest part of it is employed in censure. The point peculiar to the Methodists, they say, is "a divine teaching, not through the ordinary means common to all men, study, and the instruction of others, but a teaching by the immediate communication of the Holy Spirit. *They* who know, &c. may fairly be said to have known the mind of the Lord, and may lay claim to have been his counsellors in the work of redemption." In a note they give us to understand, that "the Quakers hold this divine teaching of the understanding, and with perfect consistency throw the Bible away as a dead letter,

“letter, as useless; a divine teaching must
 “superseede human means and authority.”
 If they mean that this point was invented by
 the modern Methodists, when they say it is
 peculiar to the Methodists, nothing is more
 easy than to shew that they are mistaken.
 From Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Cyprian,
 and from vast numbers of the Fathers, as
 well as from all the Reformers, it might be
 shewn, that the inward teaching of the
 Spirit of God has ever been held, and
 revered by all serious Christians. That
 its whole nature is quite misrepresented in
 this article, the account I have given of it in
 the foregoing Essay, which was written be-
 fore I had seen a line of their Criticism of
 Mr. Newton, and still more, the whole
 tenor of the Book in question, will evince.
 It may be proper to add, that a very candid
 and favourable account is given of Newton’s
 Messiah in the English Review.

In the Critical Review for September, 1787,
 on “Memoirs of Gabriel D’Anville,” we are
 presented with a passage from the address to the
 Students of Oxford and Cambridge, which
 describes

describes the Methodists as a "sect most destructive and dangerous, which exalts vice to reward and virtue to punishment, some of them in, and others out of the church, their first aim to inculcate moral turpitude, melancholy, and despair, and pronounce men consigned to everlasting torment, unless they can work themselves into a belief that they have been arbitrarily elected before the worlds to the kingdom of heaven, morality, and good works, though under the best motive expressly reprobated. The Suicide, practised among the middling and lower ranks, is frequently to be traced to the doctrine and threats of these men."

I would ask any reasonable man, who has known the doctrines of Methodistical teachers and their fruits and effects, whether there be a word of truth in all this. There are different shades of dislike in different opponents. If I mistake not, the Monthly Reviewers would not approve of these views: But the Critical call this a *serious and judicious address*, and say, that it *deserves their commendation*.

dition. As I would be *candid*, where I can, I shall say no more on a subject, which calls altogether for severity.

In the Monthly Review for August, 1787, on Mr. Atkinson's Visitation Sermon at Leeds, it is said, "According to Mr. A. the doctrines, which Christian teachers should continually enforce, are the fall of man, his moral depravity, the necessity of conversion, the sacrifice and intercession of our Redeemer, the willingness of God to forgive, the eternal happiness of those who believe and are converted, and the everlasting misery and torment, which must be the inevitable portion of all who will not come to Christ, that they may have life. We leave it to our readers, to determine whether this mode of preaching is agreeable to the Apostolic injunction. "These things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in "God, might be careful to maintain good "works, but avoid foolish questions."

You will give your Readers leave, I hope, however, Gentlemen, to look into the New Testament, and examine there the Text you allude

allude to in connection with the context. It is in Titus iii. 8. The things to be constantly affirmed are, as appears from the five foregoing verses, the same things in effect which Mr. A. recommends. Man's moral depravity, the fall of man, Conversion, God's willingness to forgive, the sacrifice and intercession of the Redeemer, appear on the face of them, and the intent of constantly dwelling on these topics is, to the end that (the Greek is not *ὅτι* but *ἵνα*) believers might be careful to maintain good Works. These Christian topics are to be constantly preached, because of their salutary practical tendency. Nor is the preaching of good Works themselves set aside by this. A little candid attention to Mr. A's. sermon might have shewn the Reviewers, that he has practical preaching much at heart. It is very true, foolish questions should be avoided, which certainly are not those subjects which Mr. A. recommends to be the constant topics of preaching. I should hope these Gentlemen themselves will scarce think "God's willingness to forgive" to be a foolish

foolish question. But enough has been said as a sample of the treatment which Methodistical writers for many years have received from these fashionable Critics. A word or two on what more particularly relates to myself shall conclude this essay. "If the Reader turn to Sept. 1781, of the Critical Review, towards the close, he will see the true reason of all this censure of us Reviewers; hinc illæ lachrymæ."

Thus I can easily imagine, the Critical Reviewers will answer, and think a line or two sufficient, by way of reply, to an Enthusiast. In truth, my personal character is of too small consequence to deserve the attention of the publick, but the reputation of serious religion in the world is of vast importance. In answering Mr. Gibbon, I did what I could; I recommended what I take to be real Christianity, at the same time that I took pains to expose his misrepresentation, and to vindicate the evidences both of natural and revealed religion. The Public have a right to judge whether I succeeded in any tolerable measure, and also whether the attempt,

tempt, successful or not, deserved such a Critique as that which they were pleased to give. I think I durst almost submit to the judgment of any sensible and candid person in the world, who has read the tract, that it did not. At the same time, I beg leave to inform these Critical Gentlemen, that I have not yet begun the comments on Jacob Behmen, which they have recommended to me. It is my misfortune to have no acquaintance with the author; nor do I know where to procure a copy of his works. As I must suppose them to be well read in him, I shall be obliged to them to favour me with their copy, and also to furnish me with some useful clue for the investigation of his meaning, as I have heard that he is a very profound writer, and almost despair of penetrating his sense without their assistance.

E

ESSAY

E S S A Y III.

THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT AND JUSTIFICATION.

MY chief object here, is to rescue these doctrines from the perplexing embarrassments of useless distinctions and verbal controversy, and to point out their importance, use, and necessity. By numbers they are opposed, denied, and ridiculed; but we have not all yet filled up the measure of Antichristian profligacy. There are those who will not say that the doctrines of Atonement and Justification are *rank nonsense*; but, while they admit them in general terms, are ready to bestow this hard name upon every word made use of by their wisest and most sincere defenders.

Let the Reader be pleased to attend to a few plain Scripture-Texts, and suffer them to speak to his understanding and to his conscience. "Christ hath redeemed us from
 "the curse of the law, being made a curse
 "for us," GAL. iii. 13. "Who, himself,
 "bore

"bore our Sins in his own body on the
 "Tree," I. PETER ii. 24. "Christ once
 "suffered for Sins, the just for the unjust,
 "that he might bring us to God,"
 I. PETER iii. 18. "He that spared not
 "his own Son, but delivered him up for us
 "all, how shall he not with him also freely
 "give us all things? Who shall lay any
 "thing to the charge of God's elect? It is
 "God that justifieth, who is he that con-
 "demneth? It is Christ that died, yea,
 "rather that is risen again," ROM. viii. 32.
 "Whom God hath set forth to be a propi-
 "tiation thro' faith in his blood, to declare
 "his Righteousness for the remission of sins
 "that are past, that he might be just and the
 "justifier of him that believeth in Jesus,"
 ROM. iii. 25, 26. "For he hath made
 "him to be Sin for us who knew no Sin,
 "that we might be made the Righteousness
 "of God in him," 2. COR. v. 21.

The Treatment which those who defend
 divine truth have met with, has been singu-
 larly iniquitous. Men, zealous for God
 and his Christ, and vigilant and really chari-

table for Souls, in opposing those pretended Christians, who deny the Doctrines so expressly inculcated in such Scriptures as these, and in withstanding their insidious perversions, have been necessitated to use other terms, of similar import with those made use of in the sacred oracles, and to illustrate their doctrinal views by popular allusions and comparisons. They must do so, or else hold their peace altogether, and leave the field to Infidels and Socinians. In this honest attempt to illustrate Scripture, they have contended, that the atonement is a real and proper one; that Justification is evidently a forensic term, and that all the ideas relating to it are plainly judicial; that the redemption of Christ has in it evidently the nature of a penal satisfaction; that divine Justice may be satisfied, and sinners justified also, it was necessary this satisfaction or propitiation should be made; that here is a plain reconciliation of Justice and Mercy; that a substitution is made of Christ for Sinners, a double imputation, he made Sin for us, we made Righteousness in him.

I would

I would appeal to any unprejudiced person, whose mind has never been sophisticated with tedious reasonings, whether these be not the natural and easy conclusions to be drawn from the passages above cited, and whether an unlettered person of plain understanding, who has never heard or read any controversies on these topics, would think it possible to affix any other sense to them. If this be the case, those who first found fault with the terms satisfaction, imputation, substitution, and the like, and called them scholastic subtilties, must surely have been warped in their own minds from an honest attention to the simplicity of Scripture; and when they endeavour to draw off Men's minds from a cordial reception of these sentiments in their literal sense, as they stand in the written word; I would ask, does it become those who believe the doctrines and feel their importance, to be silent, or to speak? If the latter, what else can they do, than shew, that he who is made a curse for others, tho' innocent in himself, is treated as a sinner; and that he, who, tho' guilty in himself,

is pardoned and accepted by the merit of another, is treated as righteous in the eye of divine justice? And when we are expressly told, that God does, indeed, in this way justify the ungodly, and shew himself just at the same time, the substance of all that is contended for by Mr. *Hervey* and others, is vindicated at once. And the very terms to justify and to condemn, in ROM. viii. have plainly a forensic sense, and no other. Those who endeavour to pervert plainly-revealed truths, it will appear, ought themselves to be convinced of their own unfair dealing; and those who suffer themselves to be startled by the outcry against school-Divinity, may see reason to guard against giving way to so gross a deception. But now, it seems, the defenders of divine truth must be censured as wandering from the simplicity of Scripture, when they do no more than support that very simplicity which their accusers have perverted. This is what I call the iniquitous treatment which they have met with.

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The very same artifices were practised of old, with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity. A number of terms and illustrations have been made use of by its defenders, against those who opposed it, and for which there had never been any occasion, had no such opposition been made. What was the consequence? Those who first set the house on fire, complained of the smoke which issued from it, and with the worst grace in the world accused others for dealing in that very subtilty which they themselves first introduced. The Reader will be pleased to hear St. *Hilary* speak to this point, with great vigour of Sentiment. “The errors and “blasphemies of the Heretics,” says he in his 2d Book of the Trinity, “oblige us to do those things which are forbidden us, to search into those mysteries which are incomprehensible, to speak those things which are ineffable, and to explain that which we are not permitted to examine; and instead of performing with a sincere faith (which were otherwise sufficient) that which is commanded us, *i. e.* worshipping the Father and
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the Son, and being filled with the Holy Spirit, we are obliged to employ our weak reasonings to explain those things which are incomprehensible; being constrained, if a man may so say, by the faults of others, to commit this one ourselves." How applicable is this to the case before us! If Mr. Ludlam indeed believed the doctrine of Christ's atonement, what objection, in all reason, could he make to any who sincerely received it likewise, for representing it in the light of a penal satisfaction to divine justice for the Sins of Men, by way of confuting those who deny it to be a proper atonement? If God hath set forth his Son to be a real propitiation, to declare his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; does not God at the same time both forgive the Sinner freely, and yet vindicate the honour of his Justice? To what purpose are Mr. L's. distinctions between the Justice and Holiness of God? If there was a propriety in displaying the latter as he allows, he must have quicker perceptions than I, who can object to the display

display of the former, or can indeed point out the distinction between them in practice; or to what purpose are his distinctions between distributive and commutative justice, or with what pertinency can they be at all applied to enervate the plain conclusion resulting from the texts before us? I am not undertaking to defend all the Niceties of Argumentation into which Mr. *Hervey* and other orthodox writers may have fallen in handling those subjects. But enough has been said, to shew that their general principles are well founded, and to err by redundancy, in a cause so good, is infinitely safer than to err by defect. Vegetative life will flourish, tho' luxuriant branches be lopped off; but it cannot thrive, by any correction, where life itself is drooping. It is certain that we can know nothing of the way in which the redemption of Christ operated as an atonement, any further than we have grounds of Revelation. And it seems no less certain, that it was an unguarded and rash hint thrown out by Bp. *Butler*, in his *Analogy*, to suppose that on
this

this head the Scripture was silent. Mr. Ludlam's want of consideration in dilating a random thought into an Essay, as he has done in his account of Satisfaction, is evidently still more striking. We have seen already that the Scripture is far from being silent on this head. That "God might be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus," explains to all who have ears to hear, the very precise way in which the atonement of Christ operates for our redemption, it was to satisfy the justice of God, and render it compatible with mercy. But we have more proofs. "It is impossible that the Blood of Bulls and Goats should take away Sin," HEB. iv. Why impossible, but that we are taught to pay a regard to the value of the victim in forming a just estimate of the atonement due to divine justice? Here is then more light thrown on the subject by divine revelation. The worth of a Bull or a Goat is trifling, that of the eternal Son of God is inexpressible. Hence the latter can expiate Sin, the former cannot. This were a just way
of

of arguing, even if the sacred writer had not himself made use of it, which yet he does, Chap. ix. of the same Epistle, 13th, *If the blood of Bulls and Goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more, &c.* Further, “it became him in all things (*ωφειλε*) “to be made like unto his Brethren, that he “might be a merciful,” &c. HEB. ii. 17; and it is intimated in the preceding verse, that if he had been appointed to redeem angels, he would have assumed an angelic Nature. So far is it from being true, that the Constitution of his person was not meant to instruct us in this point.

Another proof shall be mentioned of the divine wisdom in the same stupendous work. “Such an high priest became us, who is “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate,” &c. HEB. vii. 26. On the whole, that the Saviour of men should be not a Bull or a Goat, but a Personage of unspeakable dignity and merit, that he should be of the same nature with those for whom he suffered, and that he should be sinless in that nature, are so many proofs

proofs united against the notion of the silence of the Scriptures on the reason of things in the appointment of the Mediator, and appear to me to overturn the whole of Mr. L's reasonings on the subject.

I do not recollect any other objection worth the mentioning, but one against the usual orthodox views of these subjects, and that is, that it is absurd to suppose Christ to be a sinner, and guilty men to be innocent. Dr. P —, for whom Mr. L. has laboured, I hope and believe undesignedly, in all this business, would not think it absurd for Christ to be treated as a Sinner. He has affirmed him to be one really! But to the point: Tho' Christ be a Sinner only in a forensic sense, and sinful men be righteous only in the same way, it causes not the least confusion in my ideas, to retain still the same notion of the inherent personal merits of each, nor, will I suppose, in the ideas of any one who is content with plain Scripture-testimony. I am sincerely glad, however, to find, that after all Mr. L. allows the atonement, and assents to the doctrine

doctrine of Justification. Pity that he should have wasted so much Argumentation in the support of the Socinian modes of thinking.

Hoc Ithacus velit et magno mercentur
Atridæ. VIRG.

We are now qualified, I think, to apologize for such usual expressions of orthodox divines as these, that Sin is an infinite evil, and required an infinite satisfaction. They cannot mean any more than that it is impossible to be said, how much punishment sin deserves. And this will not be doubted by those who believe the eternity of hell torments, and also the proper Deity of Jesus Christ. Infinite wisdom certainly teaches us, by these facts considered in connection, to set no bounds to the demerit of sin on the one hand, and to the merit of Him on the other who atoned for it. And the two passages before quoted compared together, HEB. x. 4. and ix. 13. lead us to argue from the dignity of the victim to the efficacy of the atonement; tho' I own I see no necessity for laying an eager stress on such expressions, or for affecting to use them continually: For,

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Cavils

Cavils and verbal Controversies apart, our great business is, to use and to apply the doctrines before us to our own case. They who deny them seem to shut themselves out of all possibility of salvation. But it is to be feared that numbers who hold them in Words, are in effect no way benefited by them. Am I indeed a Sinner, so guilty that nothing less than the blood of the eternal Son of God can expiate my offences? Then let me drop the Pharisee, and take up the Publican, "God be merciful to me "a Sinner." Self-righteous pride must be full as odious in the eyes of my Maker, as the most flagitious wickedness. It must be an essential ingredient in true repentance, that I entirely renounce my own righteousness as a ground of hope, and be thoroughly humbled. Let me learn with the penitent woman, LUKE vii. to throw myself at the feet of the blessed Jesus, to depend wholly on his atonement and merit, and on the divine goodness thro' him; and when he says to her, "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in "peace," not thy tears, thy love, thy gifts have

have saved thee, tho' she had washed his feet with ointment, loved him much, and shed tears of precious penitence; let me learn why the Scripture is so copious and full in describing Justification before God, to be all of Grace thro' faith alone, and not of works. It is that no man should boast, that God may be glorified, and that I may be qualified to thank him heartily thro' eternity for his Goodness.

When he says thy faith hath saved thee, he points out himself as the sole object of her dependance for Salvation. In every true Christian there is indeed an assemblage of all graces and virtues; but their offices are various. It is that of faith alone to lay hold on Jesus, and rely on him for Salvation. May it be my lot to fall low before the Son of God, with this woman, in simple faith, love, humility, thankfulness, adoration! May we defend and maintain indeed the doctrines of atonement and Justification, and be jealous against all attempts, not only to overthrow, but even to weaken them; but may we remember that the most flaming

orthodoxy, if it rest in mere speculation, will only be a painted pageantry, and scarce serve to any other purpose than to expose Christianity to the scorn and scandal of its enemies !

ESSAY

E S S A Y IV.

SCRIPTURAL PROOF OF THE INFLUENCE
OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ON THE UNDER-
STANDING.

MR. LUDLAM denies this influence in our days. "The sufficiency of ministers in point of knowledge, says he, must depend on a diligent study of the Scriptures, not on divine communications, as it was in the Apostles' time." And, "divine knowledge, we apprehend, is now to be acquired only by the ordinary means of acquiring knowledge of every sort; tho' it was otherwise in the times of the Apostles and first Christians. And the Spirit undoubtedly inclines the will, prepares us to receive instruction, does not convey it:" And in the case of *Cornelius*, in ACTS x. he says, "The Spirit inclined their *hearts*, but *Peter* informed their *understandings*."

Most serious Christians will undoubtedly feel themselves shocked at this language;

but Mr. *Ludlam* is not the first who held it. Bp. *Warburton*, in his “*Doctrine of Grace*,” holds the same Sentiments, allows the divine influence on the *Will*, and disallows it with respect to the *Understanding*. I remember many years since to have read an able answer to him written by Mr. *Andrews*, a clergyman at that time of his own Diocese. Indeed the idea falls in with the Spirit of the age, *reasoning to excess*, and fastidiously self-conceited; tho’ it certainly be contrary to the current of all christian antiquity. The Church of *England* has been sinking into this spirit since the days of *Charles II.* but our Reformers, I believe, would all to a man have fled from it with horror and detestation.

I accidentally saw this day a prayer *to be used, before we read, meditate, or study the Holy Scriptures*, annexed to an old Bible printed in 1637, part of which runs thus, “Grant unto me, that am naturally blind, thy good Spirit, by whose light my *understanding* being illuminated to conceive them, and my *memory* confirmed and strengthened to retain them, they may (by the blessing of the same thy Spirit)

Spirit), be so deeply rooted in my *heart*, that in my whole *conversation* I may bring forth the blessed fruits thereof." The prayer speaks undoubtedly the language of the then current divinity; and the writings of Bishops *Davenant* and *Hall*, Dr. *Sibbs*, and other Divines of that age, together with the constant language of the Church of *England*, demonstrate it. I do not mention the *argumentum ad hominem* as conclusive; but it always will have weight with modest minds. It seems to require a considerable degree of effrontery, to reckon as nothing the sentiments of men, whose piety and fruitfulness were so eminent, and who gave proof of having drunk much deeper into the Spirit of Christianity than the generality of modern Divines have done. *Cæsar's* words in *Sallust* are very applicable to our present state in religion compared with that of our forefathers. '*Profecto virtus atque sapientia major in illis fuit, qui ex parvis opibus tantum imperium fecere, quam in nobis, qui ea bene parta vix retinemus.*' And it were easy to trace back the idea of the Spirit's influence on the
understanding

understanding as common in the church of God among the Primitive fathers; and what weighs much with me is, that men of the most eminent piety are most serious and earnest in their belief of it. *They* should know the most of a subject, *whose* experience has been the largest; and I remember St. *Austin* observes, that before *Pelagius*, no man, who called himself Christian, denied the influence of the Holy Spirit. *Pelagius*, I own, went farther than Bishop Warburton or Mr. Ludlam in his opposition; yet I cannot recollect that any person upward from *Austin's* days to the Apostles ever denied the Spirit's influence on the *understanding*. I could bring ample proof from numbers of the Fathers to the contrary, if it were necessary.

Still if the scripture were against them, I should feel it my duty to reckon their authorities as nothing. But thus much is the proper result of the *argumentum ad hominem*. In this case all men should be, and modest men will be, cautious of treading on new ground, and the mind will be led to hear without prejudice the Scripture-decisions on the

the point. To shew with more precision the nature of this influence, and to guard against abuses and counterfeits of it, is not the business of this Chapter. Its existence has been denied, and it behoves us to prove it.

Every one, I think, who really desires to profit by the Scriptures, will join issue with me in this preliminary remark. The rules for interpreting them are not different from those which ought to be used in the interpretation of other Books. The *literal* sense should be clearly made out by attending to the rules of *grammatical* construction. The Sacred writers should always be understood *literally* as they speak, and no *metaphorical* sense be introduced, except the circumstances of the case absolutely require it. The Sacred writers, I believe, use the most *common* and *familiar* modes of expression to convey their ideas, and an unlettered person of plain sense may be as good a Judge of their meaning in matters of doctrine and practice, as the greatest Genius in the world. Every thing, which is of the nature of refinement and subtilty, has no place in a work, which was
composed

composed for the instruction of mankind in general, not for the entertainment of Critics. And I must believe all this, so long as I believe God is no respecter of persons, and that the soul of a Peasant is no less precious in his eyes, than that of Sir *I. Newton*. Common sense will easily suggest in general, in all cases of any importance, where there is a necessity to depart from the *literal* sense, in the same manner as in understanding *an Ode of Horace or Pindar*: Yet the benefit of learning in many respects is still great, particularly in defending the truths of Scripture against their adversaries, and in illustrating passages dark to us by the alteration of usages and by the difference of circumstances.

Happily for our present subject, there appears no reason in the nature of the case to depart at all from the common modes of speech. The language of Scripture, respecting the influence of the Holy Spirit on the mind of man, is very similar thro' the old and new Testament; all serious writers upon it, in all ages, have agreed to express themselves in much the same manner.

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The Spirit of God is always the same; the hearts of men bear a strong resemblance to one another; the operations and effects must ever be similar, under different dispensations. *David* and *Paul* would perfectly understand each other on these points; and in whatever relates to the Spirit's work on the heart, a common person at this day, acquainted with such influences himself, would understand either of them, much better than a proud scholar despising those influences, tho' in points of learned speculation which might be raised on many passages, not at all affecting the main argument, the latter would doubtless have the advantage.

In thus supporting the literal interpretation of the word of God, I have, I hope, already given one proof, that I am not contending for such influence of the Spirit, as in the least injures common sense, and the exercise of the common faculties of human nature on the Scripture. I rather mean to support them against the haughty claims of those monopolists, who under the pretence of the deference due to superior parts and learning, and to
the

the refinements of Scripture-erudition, would exclude the vulgar from the use of the doctrinal parts of Scripture. Nor can I doubt that the origin of the perversion has been *this*. Learned men did not like the *literal* sense which plainly offered itself to their notice; hence they invented strained, and far-fetched interpretations, and were led to support them by maintaining that the *scriptural* sense of any common word was different from the *literal* one. Certainly, if this be true, in the unlimited manner in which Mr. Ludlam asserts it, affirming that examples may be produced without end, it is in vain for the vulgar to take up the Bible to obtain information in Scripture-doctrines. *But we have not so learned Christ.*

On this ground I shall venture to assert, that to suppose the *understanding* is frequently put for the *will* in Scripture, in the very many passages which expressly speak of the enlightening of the Holy Spirit, is a mere *petitio principii*, a violent perversion of the rules of common sense in the interpretation of Scripture, in order to support a favourite hypothesis,

hypothesis, and a procedure which would not be endured on any other subject. However connected in *practice*, the operations of the *will* and *understanding* may be in theory, no two ideas are more distinct. The Philosopher is not more clear in his apprehensions of their diversity than any man of common capacity. To say then that the sacred writers almost constantly put the one for the other, and this without the least appearance of Necessity, is to charge them with the use of an harsh insidious metonymy in vain.

I may now be allowed to say the less on the passages themselves, which I shall quote, selecting a few plain ones; for whole Chapters, —almost whole Books might be transcribed.

Of all the books of Scripture, the Psalms are the most copious in the description of spiritual exercises of the mind. In them therefore we may expect to meet with a full account of the illumination of the divine Spirit, on the authority of divine revelation. Let us begin with the XXV. Psalm. In my quotations from this and all other passages of Scripture, I shall take care to present to the

reader nothing of a miraculous, typical, or extraordinary nature, nothing but what belongs to the case of every common Christian in every age. “ Shew me thy ways, O Lord, “ teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy “ truth, and teach me; for thou art the “ God of my salvation; on thee do I wait “ all the day.” This is the language of a man feeling his blindness, and supplicating the instructive guidance of his God; in other words, a powerful influence on his *understanding*, tho’ surely not exclusive of the *will* and *affections*. But the words expressly point out the *understanding* in the first place. No man can walk in God’s ways, except he be shewn them. “ The meek will he “ guide in Judgment, and the meek will he “ teach his way.” Here that influence on the *will*, which is allowed by Mr. L. is not expressed, and that on the *understanding*, which he denies, is affirmed. Yet, from numberless passages, indeed from the whole tenor of Scripture, it is certain that the Spirit of God alone inclines the hearts of men to that which is good. Their
corrupted

corrupted nature will never do it. But this being supposed, and men being indeed made meek and submissive, does it follow that they immediately understand the whole of true religion, and need now no farther illumination than what the natural exercises of their rational faculties will afford them? No such thing; but the gracious promise (and a delightful one it is) runs thus, that such he will "guide in judgment, and teach his way," plainly by influencing their *mental* powers. The same thought is repeated in the 12th Verse. "What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall he *teach* in the way that he shall choose;" and in the 14th, in the plainest language, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." He who has a secret revealed to him, doubtless *understands* something new. And the attentive reader sees that all this has nothing in it of extraordinary or miraculous inspiration, nothing but what is common to all who fear God.

In the LI. Psalm, after the very remarkable confession of natural depravity, *David* adds,

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Verse

Verse 5, "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to *know wisdom*." The testimony of *Asaph*, Psalm LXXIII. is full to our purpose. He owns himself unable, by all his natural exertions, to attain that light and knowledge which was necessary to repel the force of the temptation which he so pathetically describes in the Psalm. He tells us how God himself instructed him, when he earnestly supplicated him. He humbly owns his extreme ignorance and blindness, and gratefully acknowledges his obligations to God for his illumination; and cheerfully expresses his dependance on him for that end through life, till he be received to glory. The Reader will do well to consult the Psalm for himself, and may I be allowed to add, that a little experimental acquaintance with the subject, of the same kind as *Asaph's*, who met with nothing but what is common to good men in all ages, will lead our hearts more effectually into the spirit of this subject, than all the mere "theoretic investigations in the world."

The

The CXIX. Psalm might seem to have been written on purpose to elucidate our subject. "Open thou mine eyes, &c." "Blessed art thou, O Lord, teach me thy statutes, make me to understand the way of thy precepts, so shall I talk of all thy wondrous works. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law, yea I shall observe it with my whole heart. Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I have believed thy commandments. Give me understanding, and I shall live." These are some of the ardent petitions of this Psalm, which shew two things with equal plainness, both that he desired instruction to be communicated from above to his understanding, and that he desired this, as all good men do, for practical ends, that he might be enabled to serve God in righteousness and true holiness. Let it only be allowed, as it was above stated, that the Scripture uses words in their common and ordinary sense, which is only to allow, that the Scripture is not a book of hieroglyphics, but a book of plain instruction for the vulgar, and was

meant to inform all, and to deceive none, and the evidence of our proposition will be, I believe, complete. The Psalmist is a delightful writer—but one more quotation from him, and I pass to other parts of Scripture. CXLIII. 8, 10. “Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk. Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God: thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.”

Let us now hear the language of *Solomon*. “Turn you at my reproof,” says the wisdom of God; “behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you; I will make known my words unto you.” This is the direct consequence of the effusion of the divine Spirit; to the subjects of it the words of Wisdom shall be made known that they may be understood.

In the 2d Chapter, in consequence of that earnest investigation of divine knowledge, which characterises those who fear God indeed, it is said, V. 5, 6, 7, &c. “Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord

“ Lord giveth wisdom ; out of his mouth
 “ cometh knowledge and understanding. He
 “ layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous ;
 “ he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.
 “ He keepeth the paths of judgment, and
 “ preserveth the way of his saints. Then
 “ shalt thou understand righteousness, and
 “ judgment, and equity ; yea, every good
 “ path.” Here nothing is said of the Spirit’s
 influence on the will and affections, which
 yet is abundantly proved from the whole
 tenor of Scripture : His influence on the
 understanding alone is here expressly de-
 clared ; and the righteous, in the course of
 their walking with God, are taught to ex-
 pect the illumination of divine wisdom as a
 treasure reserved for their use, and to be
 afforded as exigencies require. And the
 word, Wisdom, so frequent in the book of
 Proverbs, is used in the same sense as in
 common life ; it implies in it indeed some-
 thing practical ; the wisdom that is from
 above is full of practical influence, and pro-
 duces all those good fruits, which St. James
 so beautifully describes, Chap. iii. V. 17,
 but

but still it is wisdom, it is not will or disposition, though it certainly has in its nature that powerful discernment of the beauty of holiness, *which inclines the will* and affections; and in this sense that sentence in the book of Job, "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding," Ch. xxviii. V. 28. is to be understood. The terms, Wisdom and Understanding, are here used in a way not at all uncommon. They include something practical as well as speculative. If we say in common life, "Such a man acts like a man of wisdom and understanding," you suppose that his knowledge indeed rests not in mere theory, but exerts itself in practice, as is always the case of that spiritual understanding, which is the gift of God. For he who gives the understanding, always gives a disposition to practise accordingly. See HEB. viii. 10, 11, 12. But who, except a person determined to support a favourite hypothesis against all the rules of propriety of speech, would exclude all idea of knowledge, from the words, Wisdom and Understanding?

standing? Certain it is, that the wisdom so much celebrated in the book of Proverbs, is described by him as the gift of God, the consequence of the influence of his Spirit. He tells us so again, Eccl. ii. 26, "God giveth to man that is good in his sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy." If the gift of wisdom imply in it also good practice and holy dispositions, this is only a consequential and indirect proof of the Spirit's influence on the will. And is it not absurd to allow this, and at the same time to deny the direct and immediate proof of the illumination of the understanding? What is this but to say, that the Scripture departs from the common modes of speech, without the least necessity or propriety, wraps itself in ambiguities worthy of a Delphic oracle, and refines and subtilizes in such a manner as to require uncommon sagacity to penetrate the meaning of a book, meant for the instruction of all mankind? When the same Solomon forbids us (Prov. iii. 5,) "to lean to our own understanding," he forbids us to trust in it. He knew how
incompetent

incompetent a guide it was to holiness and happiness. He knew at the same time how prone men are to rely on it, and not at all to feel the blindness and ignorance which the fall has brought on human nature. But hear his recipe of wisdom. O that we were humble enough to follow it! "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths," by enlightening thy understanding and inclining thy will. Both are included in the precious promise, but the former is more directly and more avowedly expressed than the latter.

The wisest of men has thus directed us from what source to expect all divine wisdom. And the "*goodly assembly of the prophets*" will join with him and his father in asserting the same truth, which it is a pitiable mark of the pride of the times, that there should be any occasion to vindicate in a Christian land. As, however, I must study brevity, let Isaiah speak for all the rest. Wrapt into future times, the Evangelical prophet, in his 29th Chapter,

Chapter, takes notice of the united blindness and perverseness of the people. The Whole of God's revelation is described as a sealed book, not through any defect in its light, but through the *perverse* blindness of those who peruse it. His description wonderfully suits the present state of the learned world in Europe, who, while they either entirely neglect and despise the scriptures, or endeavour to strain them so that they may speak the language of their own hearts, overlook entirely their plain and simple sense, "and seek deep
 "to hide their counsel from the Lord, and
 "their works are in the dark, and they say,
 "Who seeth us?" and "Who knoweth us?"
 "Thus the wisdom of the wise and the understanding of their prudent men shall be
 "hid." And yet, (never was the matter of fact more illustrated than at this day in our land) "the eyes of the blind shall see out of
 "obscurity and out of darkness. The meek
 "also shall increase their joy in the Lord,
 "and the poor among men shall rejoice in
 "the holy one of Israel." But let the reader weigh the whole chapter for himself, and if
 he

he compare it with the various passages in the new Testament, which throw light on its meaning, some of which shall presently be mentioned, and particularly if the frame of his heart be at all attuned to the doctrines of Scripture, he will see, that the wise, who trust in their own wisdom, may make a great parade of scriptural skill, and exercise much ingenuity in learning to know nothing, be puffed up with airy conceits, and look down with mingled pity and contempt on *the Many*, while they, as "*men of sense*" and of superior abilities, know how to make, or at least to force, the scriptures to be consistent with notions that flatter their own pride; yet in all this knowledge they *boast themselves of a false gift*; they taste no joy, no consolation from the Scriptures, remain the slaves of sin, and under the power of evil lusts, earthly pursuits, and detestable tempers. In the mean time the poor among men, who humbly look to the Lord for instruction, and submit to the teaching of his Spirit, are made to see and understand the true spirit and power of scripture-truth, and find that which causes
their

their very hearts to rejoice in their God and Saviour. The comfort and serenity, which at this day many poor in the land enjoy in religion, attended with victory over their sins, and all the fruits of righteousness, while many learned, wise, and opulent are condemned in their whole spirit and practice by the scriptures, and are as miserable as pride and unmortified lusts can make them, form a practical comment on this chapter indeed !

In the 42d, the express office of Christ is “to open the blind eyes, to bring out the “prisoners from the prison, and them that “sit in darkness out of the prison-house.” And “I will bring the blind by a way that “they knew not, I will lead them in paths “that they have not known, I will make “darkness light before them, and crooked “things straight.” I would not for the world be deprived of the comfort and benefit of these scriptures, (and blessed be God ! there are many passages of similar import) which testify as plainly as words can do, to the doctrine of the divine illumination of the understanding. He who feels his blindness

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will

will be glad of a conductor; he who does not, will be too proud to admit of one, may be determined not even to understand the person who kindly proffers to conduct him. *But* is he not in danger, while he says he sees, and haughtily asks, "Am I blind also?" of falling into the ditch? I shall only mention another passage of this prophet, wishing those who would hear his testimony more fully, to peruse him from the 40th Chapter, wholly to the end. "My people shall know
 "my name; therefore they shall know in
 "that day, that I am he that doth speak;
 "behold it is I."

It is time now to hear the divine Saviour himself speak on this subject. His words, Matt. xi. 25, are very remarkable:
 "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven
 "and earth, because thou hast hid these
 "things from the wise and prudent, and
 "hast revealed them to babes. Even
 "so, Father, &c." He sees a beauty in the divine appointment of making known divine things to some, and in concealing them from others. He cannot possibly

sibly mean the external promulgation of his religion ; for learned and unlearned, rich and poor, had this equally, whether we look at his own personal ministry, or that of his apostles, the publication of his gospel by writing, or by preaching to all sorts of persons to this day. All have this privilege equally ; and no pains was ever taken to secrete the gospel from any. It is the internal illumination of the mind which he means, and *since both then, and ever since*, the weakest are brought to understand what the wisest do not, the glory of the divine goodness in conveying light into the understanding is apparent. It follows, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father ; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son shall reveal him." Let a man's natural or acquir'd sagacity be ever so great, and let him depend on its powers ever so strongly, he will not know the Father, except the Son reveal him, which can only be by the spiritual illumination of his understanding.

Every man who leans to his own understanding, will think this no hardship : he is not conscious of his need of illuminating grace. But if a man once feel his misery and blindness, he comes under the reach of that gracious invitation, " Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls." He who once cordially falls in with the Spirit of this call, will find the salutary effects on his heart and affections ; but to deny a direct influence on the understanding itself in these influences, though they end not there, seems little, if any thing, short of giving the lie to truth itself.

In Matt. xv. he answers the question of his disciples, " Why speakest thou unto them in parables ?" " Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given." Then follows a description of the insensibility of unconverted men in hearing the word ; nor is it
ever

ever ascribed to any superior sagacity or industry of the disciples that they understood what the others did not, but to divine illumination. "To them it was given to *know*."

In John, vi. Christ says, "It is written "in the Prophets, they shall be all taught "of God." The plain meaning is, in consequence of a man's learning from the Father by his Holy Spirit, he comes to Christ, receives, obeys him. In Chap. ix. our Lord in his usual manner accommodating temporal cases to spiritual, observes toward the close, "For judgment I am come "into this world; that they which see not, "might see, and that they which see, might "be made blind." He explains afterwards, "they which see" by, "who *say* they see," and the meaning is, that he gives understanding to those who confess their blindness, and withholds it from those who trust in their own powers for illuminating themselves; which single consideration justifies the importance of the subject before us. The 14th and 16th Chapters of St. John speak plainly of a Comforter, "the Spirit of Truth, whom the

“ world cannot receive, because it seeth him
 “ not, neither knoweth him.” The precious
 privilege belongs peculiarly to those who love
 him : “ If a man love me, he will keep my
 “ words ; and my Father will love him, and
 “ we will come unto him, and make our
 “ abode with him.” “ He shall glorify me ;
 “ for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew
 “ it to you.” The testimony of these chap-
 ters is so strong, that to evade their force by
 confining their fulfilment to the Apostles or
 to primitive Christians, seems the only re-
 source of those, who “ will not submit to
 “ the teaching of the Spirit.” That there
 were some things peculiar to that age is freely
 confessed, the gifts of languages, prophecy,
 miracles, and, in general, the extraordinary
 gifts ; and these, by a little exercise of candour
 and common sense, are easily distinguished
 from the ordinary gifts, which are of an in-
 finitely more precious nature. But will any
 man say, that the first Christians alone loved
 the Lord Jesus ? To all those who love him
 indeed, these influences on the understanding
 are promised. The World indeed cannot
 receive

receive them, because they are void of his love, and exclude themselves from the Spirit's influences, and they, who deny their existence, do surely act as men of the world, and not as friends of the blessed Jesus.

From the Acts of the Apostles I shall make no quotations; it is difficult to select, where the whole might be introduced; for what is this whole history, but an account of the Spirit's influence on the understandings and affections of men? Of all the conversions there described, not one of them is said to have owed any part of it to the person's own sagacity, the whole is ever ascribed to the Lord.

In Rom. iii. 11. there is a remarkable confession made of man's fallen state with respect to his two principal faculties, the understanding and the will: "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." The chief objection, I am sensible, made by most men against the methods of divine grace, lies in their want of a just and deep conviction of original sin in all its several branches and with all its appendages. In this chapter there

is

is a striking confession made of the whole. He who can heartily assent to the whole of it, and experimentally say, "All this is true of me," may rest assured that he has learnt something of true religion. He who stumbles at the threshold *πρὸς ἑαυτὸν*, will be in a likely way to mistake in the whole of his religious investigations. Does the map of man delineated in this chapter disgust you? No wonder that you are full of objections against the doctrines of grace, regard them ever with a suspicious eye, and admit them only by halves. But learn once that you neither understand nor seek after God, and you will thankfully embrace the teachings of the Divine Spirit, which are calculated to recover you in both respects. In Rom. viii. 26. there is a remarkable account given of the Spirit's influence in prayer. "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." I believe the best paraphrase of this verse must be drawn

drawn from the experience of true Christians in prayer. They are big with *petitions*, the import of which they are far from being able fully to comprehend. It is the Spirit of God in their hearts which makes the intercession. The Christian, infirm and ignorant, is apt to be afraid, that what he prays for so confusedly will not ascend to heaven. He is comfortably assured here, that he shall be heard not according to his imperfect conceptions, but according to the full meaning of the Spirit, which is perfectly understood by him whose Spirit it is. Those who in ardour inexpressible, and with the keenest sense of misery and the most inflamed affections toward God, do from time to time give vent to their desires, in unutterable groanings, and feel inwardly the most intense desires, but accompanied with much ignorance, confusion, and distraction, these are the men here spoken of. "Enthusiasts;"—no matter. I had rather be of their number than be classed with the wisest of the men of this world. Their knowledge of what they pray for is very inadequate, but there is some knowledge, and of that the Holy Spirit is the author.

If

If we turn now to the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, a scene is laid open perfectly similar to that which we saw in Mat. ii. and coincident with that in Isaiah, xxix. On Chapter ii. of this Epistle, I particularly rest the proof of spiritual communications, and shall refer the reader to my paraphrase of it in the article of rationality, p. 157 of "Gibbon's account of "Christianity considered." Mr. Ludlam, endeavouring to prove me mistaken, when he comes to the three last Verses refuses to enter into their precise meaning. To what purpose then did he undertake the task at all? If he avoid the discussion of the very point on which the argument turns, I shall conclude that he himself was conscious of an entire impossibility to give any other sense to the passage than what I have given, to his own satisfaction. In this Chapter we are told of a revelation of things which have not entered into the heart of man, a revelation made by the Spirit of God; he alone can know them, just in the same manner as "no

man

man can know the things of a man, save the spirit of a man that is in him." If we know them then, it must be by a communication of the same Spirit; and this Spirit we (that is, not Apostles only, but all true Christians) all who love God have received, 9th Verse, in consequence of which we know the things freely given to us of God; these things the natural man receives not with his will; for he knows not their real excellency, for want of spiritual discernment. A spiritual man is made capable of judging of every thing that essentially concerns religion, though he himself cannot be truly understood by any natural man. For the mind of the Lord is incomprehensible, and a true Christian, so far as he has the mind of Christ, is incomprehensible also.

I confess there is something very bold and sublime in this view of spiritual understanding: And a man has great need to be well seasoned by humbling views of himself in order to make a right use of it. The privilege itself, however, is too great to be given up; it enters into the life and glory of the Christian

Christian religion. I have weighed, with all the care and caution that I can, the contents of this Chapter, and I have paraphrased it now and formerly according to the grammatical meaning of the words. To me it seems an audacity of Criticism not to be endured, to suppose that the word *known* does not mean what it commonly means. I am assured it must be understood literally in this place, both because this spiritual knowledge itself is here compared to the knowledge which a man has of his own internal perceptions, and because the word known in the last Verse of the Chapter is certainly used in its literal meaning in Isaiah xl. 13. to which the Apostle alludes. I have read in some of the antients, I think St. *Austin*, that “ the Spirit of God in the heart is to the soul, “ what the soul itself is to the body.” The comparison is bold, but is justified in the substance of it at least, by the Apostle’s account in this Chapter. It is very difficult to avoid being carried away by the torrent of fashionable opinions, whatever the fashion be.

In

In no age since the Apostles' times, were the influences of the Holy Ghost more suspected; a strong proof not of our humility, but of the contrary. There was a time, when such a paraphrase as I have given would have been generally received in the christian world. I contend not however for words, but for things. I am free to acknowledge that the term perceptive faculty which I made use of is not so philosophically proper as the term new principle would have been; but the thoughts are just the same; to me they appear of vast importance, in order to form a truly humble, serious, and devout spirit, and entirely connected with the very genius of Christianity. I shall however sincerely thank any person who will convince me from a grammatical analysis of the Chapter, that I have mistaken the Apostle's argument. I hope I shall be deaf to all other sorts of arguments, particularly to the reasonings of such as undertake to confute, and yet refuse to enter into the precise meaning of the very Texts on which the sense of the points in question depends.

I

The

The 3d and 4th Chapters of the 2d Epistle to the *Corinthians* are full of instruction also to the same purport. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed," &c. Certainly in this sight of the glory of the Lord there is the very precise nature of illumination, which is attended with a transforming efficacy on the affections, and this whole work is that of the Spirit of the Lord. And in the 6th Verse of the next Chapter the illumination is said to be as much the work of God, as the introduction of light into the material creation was; and it is expressly called knowledge. "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Indeed a man may say that knowledge is put for will and affections: But he must make "rank nonsense" of the passage by the change; and it is a disgrace to the understanding of Mr. Ludlam, and the strongest proof in the world of the prejudiced state of his mind, to support his
views

views on so weak a foundation ; for he seems scarce to have any other argument.

And I shall continue to believe, that when St. *Paul* prayed, Ephes. i. 17. " that " the Father of Glory would give unto " them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of " their understanding being enlightened that " they may know," &c. that he meant what he said, and that if he had been speaking of the divine direction of the will or affections, he would have been able to have expressed himself in as intelligible a manner with respect to them also. I shall think in the same manner of the prayer for the *Colossians*, 1st Chapter, " That ye might be filled with " the knowledge of his will in all wisdom " and spiritual understanding," the effect of which knowledge is expressed in the next Verse. " That ye might walk worthy of " the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful " in every good work, and increasing in the " knowledge of God." He plainly begs for the divine influence both on their understandings and their affections.

If there is any thing certain to be learnt from the Scriptures, it is the three-fold office of Christ, as Prophet, Priest, and King. It were easy to bring a number of passages to illustrate it. The passage of the prophet *Jeremiah*, quoted in Heb. viii. is one of the clearest; in the 10th Verse, Christ acts as a *King*, ruling the heart; in the 11th, as a *Prophet*, illuminating by his Spirit the understanding; in the 12th, as a *Priest*, atoning for, and procuring the full pardon of sin; but to say, “that they shall all know me,” has no reference at all to the positive illumination of the understanding, is to confound the offices of Christ, and to make the whole passage a *rudis indigesta que moles*. And when I consider how I am exhorted to hold fast the profession of my faith without wavering, in Heb. x. 23, after a second quotation of a part of the same passage, the line of duty is drawn for me, and, with all tenderness and charity for their persons, I am bound to withstand the errors of those who corrupt Christianity.

“Ye

“Ye have an unction from the Holy one,
 “and ye know all things,” 1. *John* ii. 20.
 So St. *John* addresses the Christians of his
 time, and happy is it for the church of God
 that, as our necessities are as great now as
 formerly, “his hand is not shortened, that
 “it cannot save, nor his ear heavy, that it
 “cannot hear.”

Just at the conclusion of this Epistle we
 have this Apostle’s testimony, in terms the
 most determinate and unequivocal that can
 be conceived, “We know that we are of
 “God, and the whole world lieth in wicked-
 “ness. And we know that the Son of God
 “is come, and hath given us an understand-
 “ing, that we may know him that is true:
 “and we are in him that is true, even in his
 “Son Jesus Christ.” He is evidently speak-
 ing here of the state of all true Christians, of
 all who are not of the world; to all these an
 understanding is given that they may know,
 and I fear those who despise such communi-
 cations must, in every age, be classed with
 the world.

I will

I will suppose now a person to be in doubt concerning this or any other important article of faith, would it not be proper for him to follow the counsel of Christ? "I counsel thee to buy of me, &c. and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayst see." REV. iii. 18. If men know themselves to be poor, and blind, and naked, they will thank him for his advice. But how can it be followed at all on the principles of those who will not believe the Spirit's influence on the understanding?

It may be said, that in all these passages the sacred writers are only speaking of the will and affections; and in truth there is so close a connection between these and the understanding, that it is not to be wondered at, if the same passage may sometimes speak of both. But I would hope, that those who are fond of Mr. Ludlam's scheme, will at least not suppose that the passages which speak of the former, militate at all against those which speak of the latter. I maintain with the Church the influence of the Spirit on both. But there is a sophistical method
not

not uncommonly used in our days in things of this nature. A *Trinitarian* believes both the divinity and the humanity of Christ; a *Socinian* only the latter; yet Dr. Priestley, just as if the *Trinitarian* ever denied the humanity of Christ, seems to quote the passages which relate to this last, as so many proofs on his side of the question. I hope this sophistry will not be practised on the present occasion. In truth, since the Apostles' days, the Holy Ghost was never so opprobriously treated as at this day on christian ground. No known thief could be more severely suspected than he: it could not be so with us, if we did not lean excessively to our own understandings; and the Scripture mode of withstanding such evils, is surely not to meet them half way, but to "contend earnestly for the faith, which was once delivered to the saints."

It may please some minds, to see something of the Spirit's influence on the will allowed, while he is denied any access to the understanding. Perhaps it would have pleased them just as well, to have seen a revival of Dr. *Whitby's* scheme of an influence allowed
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on the understanding, but denied to the will. Hear his words, "What we do really believe
 " to be our chiefest good, will still be chosen;
 " and what we apprehend to be the worst of
 " evils, will, whilst we do continue under
 " that conviction, be refused by us. It there-
 " fore can be only requisite, in order to these
 " ends, that the Good Spirit should so illumi-
 " nate our understandings, that we, attending
 " to, and considering what lies before us,
 " should apprehend and be convinced of our
 " duty." *Whitby* on the five points.

Whether an exclusive influence on either alone be possible in the nature of things, should be better known to those who undertake to assert it, than to me who maintain on Scripture-ground the influence on both. I cannot however but suspect that the very idea is in itself absurd. Some of the passages I have quoted, and indeed the general tenor of Scripture, and all common sense, seem to me to say, that an influence must first be on the understanding; but I avoid metaphysics, and mean to travel on the whole in the path of Scripture. In the mean time it is curious to
 see

see how learned men, not over-fond of the teaching of the Spirit, erect Babels of their own, and pull down those of their predecessors. Between Dr. *Whitby* and Mr. L. we shall have no spiritual influence left, just as between the discordant schemes of Bishop *Berkeley* and Dr. *Priestley*, one denying the existence of matter, the other of spirit, we shall have neither soul nor body left to us. For my part, I shall desire to submit to divine revelation, which tells me, that “the Spirit of the Lord shall rest on the Messiah, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord;” Isaiah xi. and that “he who is joined to the Lord is one Spirit,” and therefore in his measure receives out of his fulness; and while he receives, he is thankfully glad of the Spirit’s influence on all his faculties; for all his faculties need it: “If any man be in Christ
 “he is a new creature, old things are passed
 “away; behold, all things are become new,”
 2 COR. v. 17. and if the Scripture testimonies

nies adduced will not prove the point before us, it must be because it is not in the power of language to do it.

ESSAY

E S S A Y V.

THE NATURE OF THE SPIRIT'S INFLUENCE ON THE UNDERSTANDING.

THE passages of Scripture, which have unquestionably proved to us the reality of this influence, do also throw a strong light on its nature. Persons unacquainted with it by any experience, are ever ready to form the most erroneous conceptions, and to confound it with the visionary extravagancies of the wildest fanatics. They are always apt to suspect the soundness of that man's judgment who makes even the most scriptural profession of it; and this seems to be the exercise of revenge against him for making pretensions to that, of which they have no idea. Though therefore I cannot hope to cure this prejudice by any thing I can advance, and nothing but a degree of similar experience, in themselves, can wholly subdue it, yet it may be worth while to throw together a few hints on the subject.

First,

First, I observe this influence is not merely theoretical. Mr. Ludlam, by his distinctions between the head and the heart, and indeed by the general turn of his reasonings, seems to misunderstand entirely the views of those whom he opposes. He looks on them as holding, that their doctrinal opinions, merely as such, are taught them by inspiration. Now it is certain, that a man may, by education, by the exercise of his natural faculties, and by various means, be induced to embrace all the doctrines of grace, and may even be an able polemical Divine without one grain of spiritual understanding, and without the least beneficial effect on his heart and life. Matter of fact demonstrates this, and I believe none are so deeply concerned for this as truly spiritual persons: others may affect to grieve at it; *they* love the prosperity of godliness, and are vexed to the soul at any thing that seems to wound it. And the writings of those whom Mr. Ludlam has thought proper to oppose, are so full of observations on *these things*, that he ought to have suspected that he was fighting with a shadow,

shadow, and was triumphing without victory, while he himself did not understand what spiritual knowledge properly means. David's opinions in religion were the same after his fall as before, his spiritual understanding, however, *was deeply declined and obscured.*

And as it is not the mere theory of Christian doctrines, which will give a just idea of the Spirit's influence on the understanding, (I say the mere theory, because this, in some degree at least, must be included) so neither, secondly, does it consist, properly speaking, in Christian tempers, dispositions, and practice. We have seen that there is no way of maintaining this from Scripture, but by supposing the understanding to be put for the will, and the repeated, I may say, uniform testimony of Scripture forbids such a notion. Propriety of language also is lost entirely on this ground, nor do I believe the wildest and most fantastic visionary in the world ever ran into more strained and far-fetched interpretations of Scripture, to support his fancies, than Mr. Ludlam has to support his hypothesis on this subject. If

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Scripture

Scripture and propriety of language forbids us to conclude that the illumination of the Spirit consists in the state of the affections, I think, without entering into metaphysical niceties, that there is nothing in the constitution of human nature which favours the notion. That the state of the affections has a powerful influence on the judgment, is certain; but that any particular state of the affections *is possible, exclusively* of some influence on the understanding in the first place, is to me a matter highly problematical. The understanding seems to be first *impressed*; *the will thence derives its inclination*; and this again acts reciprocally on the understanding. This appears to me to be the ordinary course of things, and to be consonant to the ideas I have of the constitution of human nature. The operations of the divine Spirit seem to agree to this view of things; and to suppose them to move the will, without giving the least light to the understanding by any influence, seems, I cannot but suspect, more proper for mere animal than for the rational nature. Mr. Locke, in his whole
essay,

essay, appears, by tracing all the operations of the mind up to Ideas, as their source, and by shewing us how all knowledge is derived from the agreement or disagreement of those ideas, to lay down a map of man perfectly consonant to these views. I must submit it, however, to those whose minds have been more directly conversant than mine has been for years, with studies of this nature, how far these hints are agreeable to truth: that they are to Mr. Locke's Essay, I seem to see clearly: His book, notwithstanding my disagreement with him in Divinity, I think the best account, with which the world was ever favoured, of the constitution of the human mind as far as my reading informs me, which has not entered sufficiently into the newer and later works of that kind, to pass any determinate judgment on them.

The Weight, however, of the question before us, rests not on these speculations, on which, perhaps, I have rather too freely digress'd. Suffice it to have shewn, that the nature of man gives no presumption in fa-

vour of Mr. Ludlam's opinion, but rather the contrary. And if all regard to experience in religion is not to be thrown entirely out of the scale in religious questions, and if it is not to be condemned altogether as Enthusiasm, I will add further, that Experience decides entirely the same way. If I should ask all, whose hearts have tasted any thing of divine grace, and whose lives express it most unquestionably, whether the Spirit of God has illuminated their understandings, as well as rectified their affections, they would, (supposing them never to have heard of the controversy before us) perhaps all to a man, I am sure the far greater part would say, with the most sincere confession of the smallness of their own attainments in both, "that he has done both for them in some degree, and that they need him in one respect as well as in the other." How far this may influence the opinions of Mr. Ludlam's, "men of sense and of superior abilities," it is not for me to say; but in the light of common sense it weighs something in my mind; and in a case of experimental philosophy, the testimony

testimony of facts would be more regarded than the most plausible theory in the world.

I conclude then from scripture, propriety of language, the nature of man, and experience, that the divine illumination does not consist in the will. "If it consist neither in the theory of Christian doctrines nor in practical effects, in what does it consist?" Your question is right. This, I own, was once to me a great desideratum, though I well remember the time when I felt nothing of my ignorance in the subject. The truth is, I believe, it consists in something much connected indeed with both, but in something materially distinct from either, something which Mr. Ludlam and all men of his views always overlook, as if it had no existence either in the doctrines of scripture, or in the experience of good men; for want of which men "will not understand, but walk on still in darkness;" and it will be well, if men, however sagacious and learned, will at length confess the possibility of the existence of something in religion, to which they have
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ever been too lofty to stoop, or too careless to attend.

I shall assume it as a point sufficiently proved in the foregoing essay, that there is such a thing as spiritual knowledge ; that he who is possessed of it is properly called a spiritual person, is a real Christian, and really loves God ; and that he, who is destitute of it, is a natural man, and neither knows nor loves God in a Christian sense. *Hence it will follow, that the nature of the knowledge in question is spiritual, so called because it proceeds from the energy of the Spirit.* If the terms I use be new to men versed only in modern divinity, it should be remembered, that the religion which they have imbibed, has made no provision of words for us on this subject, because it despises altogether the thing. It gives it no titles but those of abuse and contempt, such as Enthusiasm, Fanaticism, and the like.

The nature of the knowledge then before us depends not on the subjects of it, so much as on the manner of knowing them. The views of a spiritual and of a merely rational person on the same doctrines, are totally distinct.

distinct. I cannot satisfy men, who think with Mr. Ludlam, by any description I can give of this matter; if I could, I should contradict the very thing I maintain, and my inability to do it is, itself, a presumption that I hold the truth, and throws some light on the 1. COR. ii.

Here, however, lies the truth. A spiritual man discerns the beauty, propriety, suitability, and divine excellence of Christian doctrine, in such a light as convinces him of its divinity, and forms of itself an invincible argument of the truth of the Scripture. This is some information, though inadequate. Hence he loves God, and his Christ, hates sin, loaths himself, loves his neighbour, forgives injuries, practises all Christian virtues. Spiritual knowledge, (but not without the constant energy of the same Spirit) is always attended with these effects. A mere theorist may see that these doctrines *are in scripture*, but he may neither be fully nor perhaps at all convinced of their real divinity, nor in the least influenced by them in his dispositions. Perhaps the subject may be farther illustrated
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by an induction of a few particulars. A spiritual person discerns the evil and malignity of sin, and the excellency and purity of the law of God ; and in general he has a genuine taste for the word of God itself, and feels in some real degree the amiable description of it in the XIXth Psalm. The perfections of God appear to him in their true glory. He sees the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God, Is. xxxv. 2. He beholds the real preciousness of Christ, and of his mediation, and, to say all in a word, of the whole of his religion. He beholds the glory of the Lord, and is changed into the same image. God hath shined into his heart, to give the *light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*.

“ The light of the glorious gospel of Christ, “ who is the image of God, *shines* unto him,” 2. COR. iv. Hence he views every thing with very different eyes from those of the natural man. He becomes acquainted with Satan’s devices, with the workings of his own heart, and with the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, and is introduced
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into a new world of experience, and can form a true judgment of ten thousand things within and around him, of which the natural man, tho' much his superior in natural sagacity and acquired learning, can conceive nothing. The happy effect of all this on the practice is obvious; and the great end of spiritual illumination is doubtless holiness of heart and life; but it is not my present business to enlarge on this.

Should any, hitherto unfriendly to such views, feel a desire of scriptural information on them, I believe they may find the former parts of both St. Paul's Epistles to the Cor. pregnant with instruction, and vindicating what I have affirmed on the subject. It is natural enough for others to call spiritual persons proud, and perhaps none are prouder than those, who merely pretend to Spirituality. Such pretences there is much reason to guard against with the utmost caution and jealousy. But let us take care, while we pull up weeds, that we do not with a merciless, indiscriminating hand, attempt to eradicate all the plants and flowers. There is,
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and there must be, such a thing as the spirituality which has been faintly described; and true humility and poverty of spirit are its essential fruits. Every object of spiritual discernment tends to produce them. A spiritual man knows and discerns each day of his life that which more or less teaches him to be humble.

I am desirous to state this matter in as clear a light as possible. Let it only be allowed, that there is such a thing as Conversion, and that one of the circumstances attending it is this, that the man now finds a new light thrown upon the scripture-doctrines, in consequence of which he discerns in them what he never saw before, the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ, the malignity of sin, the beauty of holiness, the pleasantness of wisdom's ways, the depths of iniquity within his own heart, the crafts of Satan, and the unspeakable preciousness of the Redeemer in every thing which belongs to his person, salvation and kingdom. I am mentioning things well known to many; some of whom might, previous to their conversion,

version, have very little knowledge of the Scriptures at all ; others might be well versed in the historical parts, and perhaps in the doctrinal. Some of them might be total despisers of the word of God, others might reverence it and believe it to be divine. Some of them might believe a part of its doctrines to be true, and disbelieve the rest. Some of them might believe them all to be divine, others scarce any of them. An endless diversity may arise from the endless variety of their tempers, education, opportunities, and pursuits. But in this they will now all agree, that they see in it, what they did not at all before : (It will be understood, I am speaking of adult converts in general ;) and what they now see is effectual, in the hands of him who illuminates them, to change their wills, to alter the whole course of their affections, and cause them to walk in God's Statutes, and to keep his judgments, and do them. This new discernment is plainly distinct from the speculative knowledge of scripture-doctrines, or from the grammatical sense of the written word, which
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in a natural way is attainable, and has been attained in a more or less degree by many, who were never illuminated in the manner now stated, and whose lives are therefore as unholy as those of the rest of mankind; because the same Holy Spirit who enlightens the understanding, always rectifies the heart. See 2. COR. iii. 18. One probable and common effect of this spiritual discernment indeed will be, that the man shall heartily receive, as divine, some doctrinal truths, which his prejudices formerly would not allow him to embrace. Still, however, this discernment has in it the nature of knowledge, not of will; of instruction, not of disposition; of information, not of affection. The same Holy Spirit by the means of it rectifies indeed his will, disposes him to good, and sanctifies his affections. And this is the great end aimed at in all the work of the Spirit of God on the human heart. But there is a real and positive influence on the understanding; instruction, and that the most precious in the world, is actually conveyed, or otherwise. "Ignoti nulla cupido."

I hope

I hope some idea may now be formed of the nature of spiritual illumination, that the understanding is concerned in it directly, the affections consequentially; and that it is perfectly distinct from, though connected with, that scriptural knowledge, which may be called merely rational.

What spiritual knowledge is not, and what it is, has been shewn, so far perhaps as a verbal description can shew it. And there are three considerations which have suggested to me, at the same time, the importance of these sentiments, and the danger of those who either entirely with Pelagius, or partly with Mr. Ludlam, oppose the influences of the Spirit.

1st, There is nothing more strongly recommended in Scripture, than a deep sense of our ignorance and blindness, attended with the hearty spirit of prayer for divine instruction. When we view ourselves as actually blind, poor, and naked, and in all our faculties fallen from God, we do honour indeed to the influences of the divine Spirit, the loftiness of man is humbled, and the Lord alone is exalted. It would be to quote

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a third part of the Scriptures to quote what relates to this subject; and what Mr. Hervey asserts of the mistakes of men of superior abilities in Divinity, is evidently no more than what the Scriptures abundantly affirm, some of which have been adduced already. And surely matter of fact is proving it daily. Who invented the various heretical opinions, which, in different ages of the church, have pestered Christianity? Men of Genius surely, and of cultivated parts. And need I name living witnesses of the same awful truth? Thus "doth God take the wise in their own craftiness;" thus "doth he know the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain," 1. COR. iii. 19, 20. Now whatever weakens our idea of the Spirit's teaching, will of course lessen our idea of spiritual illumination, indispose the mind to prayer, lay it open to the crafts of Satan, and to the illusions and corruptions of the heart, and inflate it with pride. I have heard that Dr. Priestley was educated, in early life, in doctrines diametrically opposite to those in which he now glories. Is it to be believed, that had he

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continued humbly dependant on God, and never thrown away the precious guard of humility and self-diffidence, he had ever arrived at the summit of antichristian arrogance, from which he now looks down on his fellow-mortals with the dignity of self-satisfaction and superior contempt? "Principiis obsta." Deny the Spirit's access to one faculty, it is as easy to deny his access to another, and by degrees to them all. Then farewell the precious garb of christianity, humility; rampant pride and an intrepid spirit of blasphemy and profaneness will deal destruction around. Men will no longer pray, but dispute; and God, in his righteous judgments, will "leave them at large to their own dark designs."

2d, The direct and immediate tendency of the opinions which I oppose, is to lead men to the neglect of Christian faith and Christian principles in general. If men really believe that they need no light from above, they will take up with such views of Scripture as happen to be fashionable, or give no pain to their pride or their lusts.

Every doctrine will be viewed in a superficial, careless manner, and men will soon persuade themselves that there is nothing more material to be known than what they are possessed of already. St. Paul, in Ephes. iii. speaks of "the manifold wisdom of God and "the unsearchable riches of Christ;" expressions which intimate an amazing depth of knowledge, which the humble soul, in perusing the Scriptures, will expect to be opened by divine illumination. All this will be passed over by the self-taught rationalist in an heartless general manner. Doctrine will appear of little importance; and if conscience distress him on account of his practice at times, he may pray for grace in general to amend his life, but his views will be unconnected with Christ, and of course he will be destitute of the true and only arms which can cut down the powers of sin and Satan.

And 3d, The careless, unfruitful, unchristian lives of those in general, who espouse opinions so dishonourable to the Spirit, convince me that they are in the wrong. We may grieve the Holy Spirit, and think

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we do no great harm; but the dreadful consequences of being left to our own pride and obduracy of heart, evince the contrary.

An Answer to an objection or two will properly conclude this Essay. It does not follow from a Christian's laying claim to the teachings of the Spirit, that he pretends to Infallibility. He does not connect his idea of these influences with this or that particular doctrine, but in general with the whole of revealed religion. Nor does he suppose that he is perfectly taught every thing in the scriptures. I know no Christian in our day who pretends to any such thing. 'Tis in a gradual manner that he is taught, and his progress much depends on his faithfulness to the light already afforded him, on diligence, watchfulness, sobriety, humbleness of mind, fervency in prayer, and heavenly mindedness. He is so far from supposing that he knows all things, that he does not depend on any stock of knowledge acquired already. His right frame of soul is to lie very low at the throne of grace, and wait from day to day for communications from above. These communi-

cations are much larger to some than to others; varied and diversified exceedingly on many accounts, which it is not my business to enlarge on at present. Does a beggar who lives daily by alms pretend to the riches of Cræsus? No less absurd are Mr. Ludlam's representations on this subject. Nor does the Christian minister assume to himself the least authority over the consciences of others, on account of these communications. They respect not others, but himself; his ministerial authority is built entirely on the written word; which is a sufficient directory, by which we may try all doctrines, and ought not to be called "an equivocal test of Christian experience," by one who professes to believe "that the scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 TIM. iii. 15. And how can any man assert that a divine illumination of the understanding would set all persons upon a level, as it did the illiterate fishermen of Galilee, when it is considered that there is no reason to believe, that even these illiterate fishermen were all on a level.

Peter

Peter and John, for instance, seem to have been superior to the rest in several respects, and the Apostle Paul, most probably, was more illuminated than any of them. If equal degrees of illumination be afforded, a perfect equality would be the case; but there was even then a great diversity and variety of extraordinary gifts, and of ordinary ones too, both at that time and at this day.

Mr. L. seems to embarrass himself with the difficulty of distinguishing between essentials and non-essentials in religion. If there be no way of doing this, I confess we all have our religion yet to learn. He quotes the distinction I pointed out in Part 2d of my Answer to Gibbon; and I now appeal to any man of candour, whether the account there given of real Christianity be such as will take in Socinians and all sorts of opinions, as Mr. L. represents. Original sin, justification by faith, and the new Birth are determinate doctrines; and, in answer to the whole farrago of ambiguity with which he would cover the subject, I would say, " that
 " the Scriptures are able to make men wise
 " unto

“unto salvation,” and of course to teach them to distinguish essentials from non-essentials. The reign of scepticism was sufficiently extensive before Mr. L’s essay was published: There needed not the addition of his services. And I have the satisfaction to say, that I personally know numbers, who are perfectly agreed in the essentials, and understand one another in them, though very different from one another in non-essentials, and who all serve God in the Gospel of his Son. Nor is the distinction an unscriptural one as he rashly asserts. St. Paul, 1 COR. iii. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, states it in the clearest terms, and illustrates its effects.

Lastly, the zeal with which I have defended the rights of common sense against the spirit of learned monopoly, will, I hope, convince the reader, that I mean not to set *it* aside in religion; no, nor good learning, and the use of various means, which God has appointed for our growth in Christian knowledge. I may venture to say the same for Mr. Scott, Mr. Newton, and in general for
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several clergymen whom the world is pleased to call Enthusiasts. On the contrary, I believe no men make so strenuous and profitable an use of their natural faculties in religion, as those who are most earnest in depending on divine illumination. But the use of these things is subordinate; they dare not place them in the room of the Holy Ghost; "not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts," Zec. iv. 6.

ESSAY

E S S A Y VI.

ON ENTHUSIASM.

THE word is in our days generally used in a vicious sense. In such a sense I intend to use it, though of the numbers who have learned to talk against Enthusiasm, many seem to have no determinate idea of the subject at all; only the frequent repetition of the term gives them an opportunity of venting their dislike against all serious religion, and of supporting their pretensions to the character of men of sense. If the word is to be considered as a sign of any determinate idea, it must be meant to mark the character of those who fancy themselves influenced by the Holy Spirit, when they are not so. Such there doubtless ever have been. St. Jude's short Epistle describes them in the most graphical and the most pointed terms. St. Paul, 2 Cor. xi. speaks of them as deceiving the Corinthians. The Montanists seem to have been full of the same delusion; and doubtless many
fantastic

fantastic visionaries were in the Church from age to age, though their catalogue may have been swelled beyond the truth, for want of candour or just information in many historians. The German Anabaptists, who trod on the heels of Luther, distinguished themselves by the most egregious follies; and in Cromwell's days this country had its full share of the same evils. It appears by Mr. Edward's Book on the Religious Affections, that New England in his time abounded with Fanaticism. Hence he was induced to describe the marks of genuine and counterfeit religion; which he has done so thoroughly, as to leave little room for me to speak. Doubtless it has also attended the revival of religion in our time, and in our country. I have seen it; lament on account of it, and detest its nature: but it seems to be Satan's usual after-game. When he cannot prevent the success of real godliness in any place, he counterfeits, and labours in that way to disgrace it. It was the remark of the German Reformer, when he heard of the extravagancies of the Anabaptists, that he did not fear
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much the present evil; it was too unnatural and violent to last long; but he dreaded the contemptuous calm which would succeed, and would bid fair to continue for ages.

O verissima frustra auguria rerum futurarum! Cic.

The same sceptical indifference has succeeded the delusions of the fifth Monarchymen in England. *And the Reviewers* would not be so much listened to at this day, who reproach all religion which professes to have any serious connection with the Holy Spirit, were it not remembered that there were those who professed the same thing, and proved by their conduct that they possessed it not. It should however be considered that the very appearance of Enthusiasm is generally a presumption of some real religious excellence then existing in the same Scene, or at least that has existed a little before.

The very circulation of counterfeit coin is a presumption that sterling money is held in real and high estimation, and the religion of the Apostles might be depreciated on as good grounds

grounds as that of their successors at this day, on the pretence of Enthusiasm.

It would be a strange argument against the modern improvements in Chymistry, to urge the absurdity of the investigation of the Philosopher's Stone. In truth, Enthusiasm in religion is what that is in Chymistry; and he who derides all experimental religion as Enthusiasm, acts a part as weak in Divinity as that would be in Philosophy.

Let Enthusiasm be carefully discriminated and disgraced, but let not all influences of the Holy Spirit be despised. Let the rules of the written word be studied; the fruits of the Spirit are there delineated with accuracy. If a man in his religious proceedings follow its directions with care, depend for his salvation in the way which it points out, and find the same influences on his mind which it describes, attended with the same temptations, conflicts, reliefs, and consolations, and producing the same effects on the understanding, the temper, the affections, and the practice, which the word of God describes as the consequence of true religion,

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has he not the most solid proofs within himself, that he is really taught of God, and is no Enthusiast? Those indeed who think man to be not a fallen creature, but possessed in part, at least, of some real resources for his own salvation, may puzzle themselves with the question, how shall he know whether God has done this for him, or he has done it by the emotions of his own mind: but this can be no question with him, who knows, with St. Paul, that in him, in his flesh, dwelleth no good thing, Rom. vii. The knowledge of original sin indeed, once practically attained, is the knowledge of self; the remaining parts of the Christian religion cease to be stumbling blocks, when the pride of self-sufficiency is dethroned.

On the other hand, let a man profess ever so confidently, that he is taught of God, yet if his views, his spirit, his practice be contrary to the written word, he must certainly be an Enthusiast. How clear is this distinction! how injurious to the honour of Scripture to call it an equivocal test: One would be almost tempted to suppose that
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those who can use such language regarded not its authority at all.

Mr. Ludlam's scheme however would open a door to the wildest absurdities of Enthusiasm that ever disgraced religion. If the Spirit's influence be indeed of that sort, that it moves the will, and yet "conveys no instruction," a man who feels himself strongly inclined to any particular point of opinion or conduct, may, as Enthusiasts often do, suppose himself under the Spirit's influence, and at the same time not think himself bound in the least to consult the understanding, because the Spirit gives no information to it. This, I say, is a very obvious use to be made of his scheme, and it is the only use which can be made of it, by one who thinks himself bound not to lean to his own understanding. I don't suppose that Mr. Ludlam meant to encourage Enthusiasm; but the very idea of an influence on the will, perfectly separate from the understanding, tends to strengthen delusions. Whereas the real influence on the understanding and the will in conjunction, without any pretence to any other guidance

of the Spirit, than to enable us to understand, and to make a right use of the written word, is the most remote from Enthusiasm that can be conceived.

For to pretend to be led by the Spirit without the Word, and by impulses without any light afforded to the understanding, and in contempt of the rules of common sense, and the literal grammatical meaning of Scripture, this is real Enthusiasm. I need not describe the endless variety of follies and absurdities into which it may lead men: But an influence which moves the passions, and does nothing for the judgment, is at no great distance from such pretensions. Was Mr. Ludlam pleading the cause of fanaticism?

In all real Enthusiasts there ever is a want of true humility. Persons of discernment and observation may see the pride of such men, amidst the appearances of fervent devotion, and affected self-humiliation. They are remarkable also for contempt of order and discipline, for strong self-conceit and obstinacy, for ungrateful and supercilious treatment of their religious pastors and teachers. Their
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great characteristic defect is the want of self-knowledge; hence they lie open to a thousand deceptions of Satan, of men more crafty than themselves, and even of their own preposterous imaginations. I have observed the genius and temper of such, and am free to acknowledge, that this is a weed with which religious ground is apt more or less to be infested. But what is to be done? There is one way of curing it, and that is by eradicating all religion itself; and so there is one way of curing a patient at once of many complicated and stubborn disorders, by running a sword through his body. It is the grand argument of Popery, that the use of the Scriptures should be forbidden the vulgar, because of the abuses which they are apt to make of them. But I need not dwell on the fallacy of such reasonings. It is sufficient that I have shewn that no age was ever exempt from this evil; that the Scriptures do afford a sufficient criterion of distinction; that the doctrines of the Influence of the Holy Spirit on the understanding and the will united, must in the nature of things be a

stronger guard against it, than the doctrine which denies the influence on the first, and tempts serious and humble men * to pretend to strong impulses on the will to the neglect of the understanding, and that the fruits of Enthusiasm do surely point out its nature to those who are at all upon their guard. What remains, but that instead of indulging a sceptical humour, we proceed in religion as in philosophy, not despising the whole subject because of the danger of abuses, but closely attending to the Scriptures, and comparing experience with them in the whole course of our investigations!

ESSAY

* I say serious and humble men, for I am sensible, that when Mr. Ludlam denies to us the Spirit's influence on the understanding, he would supply the want by directing men to consult their own reason as fully sufficient, rather than leave, or be thought to leave, men to mere Enthusiasm. But serious and humble men cannot consent to be delivered from delusions at the expence of true Poverty of Spirit. They know themselves. If they follow his scheme, as they dare not trust their own understanding, they must be without any at all in religion.

E S S A Y VII.

THE TRIAL OF PROPHETS.

De ipso emendatore, et correctore nostro, quædam dicenda sunt.

IN applying this to Mr. Ludlam, I mean not, however, to compare him with the dissolute monster of whom Cicero speaks. Yet he who professes to teach good sense, naturally induces us to look at himself, and to examine whether he also be clear of the errors which he ascribes to others. There is a fashionable mode of speaking and writing in different ages, which if a man has the art to adopt, he will scarce fail to attract the esteem, and even the admiration of many, to a degree far beyond his deserts. He who means to be applauded in the present age by the publick in general, must be a philosopher. If he write history, whether he state facts with accurate veracity or not, it will be sufficient if he make a number of reflections, which shall carry the appearance at least of much penetration. If he write Divinity, he
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has no occasion to attend either to grammatical construction of Scripture-passages, or to the connection and thread of the sacred writings. Let him only reason upon fashionable topics, and from popular materials, and quote a few detached texts, which may give some colour to his opinions, and let him shew mercy to all, except to Enthusiasts real or reputed, and he will pass for a rational Divine. In truth, to reason justly in religion, when the Scripture is made the sole basis of all our Divinity, and the affections are excited on grounds of scriptural argumentation, is the highest praise of a Theologian: and he is no contemptible writer, whose views are just and sound on the whole, and well supported by the word of God, though too flowery and fanciful in some respects; and this perhaps is the true character of the pious and excellent Mr. Hervey as an author. But to pretend to the powers of severe ratiocination in handling theological subjects, and yet to trifle only in verbal criticisms, and to produce the "semblance of worth not substance," sets a man down in the lowest rank
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of utility; and this seems to be Mr. Ludlam's place as a Divine, though his deserved eminence in other branches of knowledge, joined to the strong appearance of cool reasoning, so popular at this day, may cause him to be look'd on as an oracle in Theology.

The censure on Mr. Ludlam will not be thought too severe, if it be considered how much he has written on the divine justice and mercy, on satisfaction and justification, with arguments on arguments, coined from the mint of Socinian writers, and directed against those who hold the doctrines called orthodox, and yet that after all he gives his opinion on the whole (and for his own sake I am sincerely glad of this) in favour of the writers whom he opposes. The reader who carefully reviews my third Section, and compares it with his Essays, may be convinced of this egregious inconsistency. For to allow that there is some ground in the Scripture for apprehending that the holiness of God required such an atonement for sin as that of Christ, and that this is the true sense of Romans iii. 26, and yet to write a long dissertation

fertation to prove that the Scripture gives *no* light at all on the point, and to find fault with the very expreffion of fatisfying divine juftice, while he yet allows that the holinefs of God required an atonement, thefe are certainly inconfiftencies unbecoming a man of fenfe, and while they give the parade of deep reasoning, feem to be insignificant fubtilties and fanciful diftinctions.

The fame inconfiftency attends him in his laft Effay on the Spirit. Strongly does he deny his influence on the underftanding on the whole, and yet in one paffage he admits it. He allows that God may give quicker ideas to the mind. Whether a man may know it or not is another queftion, and on the ground of the doctrine of original fin has been confidered in the laft fection. But he who allows the thing itfelf in one paffage of an Effay, fhould not have fpent the greater part of that Effay in oppofing it. *

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* One more inconfiftency, or abfurdity fhall I call it? of this author, it may be proper to mention here. He fays in his laft Effay, " The Spirit alfo removes prejudices, prepares us to receive inftruction, does not convey

I hope I am influenced by a charitable view in exposing these inconsistencies. The Author himself I cannot hurt, and I have testified the pleasure I have in finding that he died not an enemy to the Cross of Christ, because salvation seems absolutely impossible to him who does so. But I feel for young students of some seriousness, who may look up to Mr. Ludlam as an oracle in Theology, because he was so in Mechanics, and led by the fashionable stream, may imbibe views from his essays extremely pernicious to their spiritual

"vey it." That a very great improvement of the understanding will easily follow the removal of prejudices, in religious, as well as all other subjects, where a man has the benefit of good instruction, is certain. But that the removal of prejudices themselves requires some previous information of the understanding, is, I think, no less certain. The very meaning of the word prejudice seems to require it. Perhaps Mr. Ludlam is the first writer in the world, who ever talked of prejudices being removed, antecedent to the information of the understanding. The most senseless Enthusiasm is easily grafted on such a scheme. "I drew them with cords of a man," Hosea xi. 4. Thus the Spirit treats us like men, not like beasts; and prejudice is removed by instruction, not by violence.

sertation to prove that the Scripture gives *no* light at all on the point, and to find fault with the very expression of satisfying divine justice, while he yet allows that the holiness of God required an atonement, these are certainly inconsistencies unbecoming a man of sense, and while they give the parade of deep reasoning, seem to be insignificant subtilties and fanciful distinctions.

The same inconsistency attends him in his last Essay on the Spirit. Strongly does he deny his influence on the understanding on the whole, and yet in one passage he admits it. He allows that God may give quicker ideas to the mind. Whether a man may know it or not is another question, and on the ground of the doctrine of original sin has been considered in the last section. But he who allows the thing itself in one passage of an Essay, should not have spent the greater part of that Essay in opposing it. *

I hope

* One more inconsistency, or absurdity shall I call it? of this author, it may be proper to mention here. He says in his last Essay, "The Spirit also removes prejudice, prepares us to receive instruction, does not convey

I hope I am influenced by a charitable view in exposing these inconsistencies. The Author himself I cannot hurt, and I have testified the pleasure I have in finding that he died not an enemy to the Cross of Christ, because salvation seems absolutely impossible to him who does so. But I feel for young students of some seriousness, who may look up to Mr. Ludlam as an oracle in Theology, because he was so in Mechanics, and led by the fashionable stream, may imbibe views from his essays extremely pernicious to their spiritual

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spiritual interests. I confess therefore that I wish them to see, that a writer so confused and inconsistent, under the shew of the severest rationality, must stand as a Divine far beneath the level of the flowery Hervey, who, with all his defects as a writer, was certainly clear and consistent in his views, and, notwithstanding the contempt expressed by Mr. Ludlam, was an able advocate of divine truth, a sensible man, though he had not an understanding of the first magnitude, and as worthy to be perused by "men of sense as by the many."

Mr. Ludlam seems, however, to have been led into his errors not for want of understanding.—But I shall say nothing personal of his character. The view I am going to give of clerical characters takes in too many to lead even to a suspicion of personality. *Ego autem neminem nomino; quare irasci mihi nemo poterit, nisi qui ante de se voluerit confiteri.* CIC.

But the religious state of things in the kingdom seems to require, that some use should be made of the test described in
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MAT. vii. 16, 20. Beware of false prophets. It may seem amazing that so little use should be made of a test so plain and clear as this. Is it asked, who are the true teachers of Christianity? Look at their fruits. A wicked man, let him have twice the parts and penetration of a Bentley, must by this rule be a false prophet. It is not expected from the common people, that they should be able to unravel the sophistry of arguments, and clear their way through the mazes of controversy. But when they hear a man undertake to preach to them the way of salvation and felicity, and yet find him to be himself a miserable slave of vice and iniquity, though he may say many true things, yet on the whole they have a right to look on him at least as a dangerous expositor of Scripture, and though he have the genius of a Newton or a Locke, they are undoubtedly as right in withholding their credit from him as a teacher, as a man of plain sense would be in refusing to purchase the nostrums of the quack, who should pretend to an infallible recipe for curing the consumption, while his external figure demon-

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strated himself to be in the last stages of that disorder. This is a plain test of easy comprehension and of easy application. Ingenious men by plausible arguments may colour any thing, and often impose not only on the vulgar, but even on the learned. But real holiness of heart and life discovers itself by its own native light, and energy; and never was nor ever can be separated from divine truth on the whole, though it be not exempt from errors of small importance.

It is well known that there are a number of Clergymen at this day in the kingdom, as singularly distinct from the rest in life and manners as they are in doctrine. Mr. Ludlam himself, with great candour, bears testimony to their piety, and to their superior usefulness. I must of necessity conclude from the test in the sermon on the mount, that they must be in possession of religious truth on the whole. It is an affecting thought what a number of Clergymen there are, whose lives demonstrate them to be totally void of any religious sensibility whatever, with whom "to pray and to sermonize" is the same thing
as

as to till the ground, or to navigate the seas, a mere secular trade, and unconnected with any concern for their own salvation, or that of the flocks committed to their charge. These must be all *false prophets and ravening wolves*. Should any such look into these papers, I would wish them to read with attention Bishop Burnet's Pastoral Care, from which they may derive the most useful information on a subject which directly concerns them. But besides these, there are many Clergymen not at all heavenly-minded, though of a more decent cast. Some of these are not inattentive to the revival of the doctrines of the Church of England, which has taken place within these last forty or fifty years, have drawn some light from it, and in part do own the benefit which divinity and morality have thence received. But while they continue slaves to the world, and unwilling to follow Christ wholly, they find the light itself to be troublesome, and they naturally endeavour to extinguish, or at least to embarrass and obscure it. For any thing they would do or suffer for the Gospel, it might be lost in the

world entirely. Others must endure the heat and burden of the day in encountering sin and wickedness, and in bearing the character either of odious hypocrites, or at least, of what is perhaps as grating to nature, of well-meaning Enthusiasts. And they will, without mercy and without consideration, join with the profane world, in laying this load on men honestly employed in the defence of truth and holiness, and very carefully secure themselves from the least suspicion of being infected with that which they in a measure internally approve, because they know that the frowns of men of opulence and power are sure to be incurred by a slight suspicion of seriousness in religion, and because they love the praise of men more than the praise of God. Men of this sort will gladly exercise revenge for the inward pain of conscience which they feel, by exposing the trifling errors of good men, by cavilling largely against their sentiments, and by faintly commending what they cannot but approve. Were it not for the light which they have borrowed from persons really spiritual, these men would not know nor approve

prove in religion even what they do. And so far is fallen man from being capable, by his natural powers, of illuminating his mind with real Evangelical truth, that hardly an instance can be found, of any, who despise the Spirit's influence on the understanding, ever so much as discovering the Scripture-doctrine of justification merely in a theoretic point of view. Those decent Clergymen in the land who abhor the teachings of the Spirit, and who yet do assent to this all-important doctrine of justification, have been driven into it through the light which in the revival of religion has spread itself in their view. Their predecessors were in general open enemies to it, though it be a doctrine professedly handled at large in the Scriptures, and two whole treatises, the Epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians, vindicate it in a polemical manner. And at this day the generality of the Clergy, decent as well as prophane, (I still mean those who like not the influences of the Holy Ghost) whose mental prejudices or external opportunities keep them out of the way of evangelical reading and hearing, are, I believe, enemies

both to the doctrine of justification and of regeneration, and teach their hearers to depend for salvation chiefly on moral virtues.

If these be the fruits of the contempt of the influences of the Holy Ghost, what an evil thing must that contempt be! and prophets may surely be tried and known conclusively on the one side and on the other by this test. But the subject may be considered still more practically. The decent Clergymen who love not spiritual influences, whether more or less informed in doctrine, do evidently appear destitute of the spirit of devotion; there are no marks of deep and steady regard to a future life perceptible in their conduct. Poverty of spirit, and what the Psalmist calls a broken and contrite heart, they are apt to despise. It is very evident that they will bear no cross for the sake of Christ. No utility, at least in any material degree, seems to result from their labours; and there is nothing in their conversation, or in their practice, which intimates that they feel for the souls of their people. Excessively cautious against Enthusiasm, they hold the reins of profaneness with a slack hand,

hand, and to speak plainly, the love of reputation, or of ease, or of preferment, or of all three together, evidently appears in their whole conduct. They seem to have no notion of acting as Shepherds to their flock: many of them can leave them without mercy to any worthless hireling, and, with anxious avidity, be looking out for more preferment, as if that were the just wages of indolence and neglect in a calling of all others the most sacred.

There are among them however men not so much tinged with this sordid avarice, and capable of generous sentiments and practices. Yet these are slaves to fame, and dread the very appearance of earnest religion, lest they gain the character of fanatics. And there is one trait of the character of these men in general, dreadfully opposite to the spirit of the Gospel, *and it is* the inordinate desire of being taken notice of by the opulent and the great. To them they pay court both in the pulpit and out of it; these they respect as the only part of their flock worthy their attention; and if they be men of taste and letters, seldom deign, either in sermons or in conversation,

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to lower themselves to the capacities of the vulgar: infomuch that I am persuaded many poor persons in their parishes would be surprized at their condescension, should they deign to talk with them familiarly on the subject of religion.

These vices are not peculiar to the Clergy of the Establishment. The same may be seen on Dissenting ground: and though my business lies more directly with the former, yet *homo sum, nihil humani a me alienum puto*. Both Churchmen and Dissenters may look at those who undertake to teach them, and by our Saviour's rule may know who are true prophets, and who not. Within the Establishment those who despise the Influences of the Holy Ghost, and out of it those who besides this are more professedly enemies to the doctrine of the Trinity, and are endeavouring to teach the established Clergymen to be so likewise, do certainly lead in general such a life as I have described, and do certainly fall under one or other of the Classes which have been mentioned. When Mr. Ludlam therefore wishes his young Clergyman not to preach,
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nor to regard the supernatural teachings held by men whose lives he commends, he certainly would rob them of that root, which alone produces the very fruit he candidly extols.

Thy Spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness, PSALM cxliii. 10.—How ardently does it become every one, who professes to teach others, to supplicate for himself in this manner !

Fruits of a very opposite nature do certainly attend the cordial friends of divine influence, though they are so sensible of their own internal evils and extreme unworthiness, that nothing but a charitable desire to promote the cause of truth and godliness could induce them to speak at all of that, which may be construed into a desire to trumpet their own praise in the world. But as Cyprian says, speaking of the very same subject of divine influences, *quamvis non jactatum possit esse, sed gratum, quicquid non virtuti hominis adscribitur, sed de Dei munere prædicatur.*

Let me beg the candid attention of Clergymen to the account which has been given, and intreat them to apply for their own profit
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in wholesome self-application, whatever may touch the consciences of any. And I may now confidently advise younger Students of Divinity to attend much to the rule of Christ before us, and to pay little attention to the judgments of men in the essentials of religion, whose lives are corrupt. It is more than probable, *a priori*, that their opinions are altogether unsound, or at least materially defective. I would recommend to their attention the many scriptures which speak of the essential errors of the learned and the wise, though in lesser things connected with religion these persons deserve to be most attended to, and desire them to consider whether men of plain sense and tolerable learning, but of genuine piety and virtue, are not much more likely to be in possession of evangelical truth than men of even *eminent endowments* and learning, whose lives are unholy. And let me advise them to be careful of attempting to correct the errors and abuses, into which even sincerely religious men may fall. They will be apt, for want of experimental divinity, to do it with a rough, and indiscriminating hand. It is much safer for them

them to leave this work to men, who have themselves laboured sincerely in religion, and acquired knowledge by experience. They should beget children, if I may be allowed to use the expression in a very serious sense, before they undertake to correct them. Let young Students apply themselves closely to the word of God and prayer. Let them come forth to teach others, furnished with some experience of the power of religion on their own hearts. And when they have for some years been employed in the Lord's work, and have seen it to thrive in their hands, when vicious men have been awakened, and reclaimed under their ministry, and sinners have been turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, then with probability of success, and with a reasonable degree of authority, they may be allowed, and in many circumstances will be called on, to distinguish *the precious from the vile*, to combat Enthusiasm and self-conceit, and a variety of religious abuses. But for persons who never set their hands to the Gospel-plough in all their days in any real labour, and who know
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nothing by experience, to undertake a work of so much nicety, argues their dependance on their own understandings at least not to be small, however slight their dependance may be on the Spirit of God.

Well were it indeed in religion, if in that the most important of all sciences men were persuaded to make use of the same methods which have been found so successful in natural philosophy. What is the reason that the Newtonian Philosophy has stood its ground, and is not likely to give way to other systems, as was the case with the former methods of explaining the phænomena of nature, which preceded it? Because it was built on experience, and time, instead of lessening its credibility, ever tends to increase it. The Æra of the Reformation in Germany and in England was in religion, what the Æra of Newton was in philosophy. The men who then expounded the Scriptures spake from their own heart that *which* reached the hearts of others, and confirmed their Scriptural views by an appeal to the conscience. The doctrine of man's natural blindness and depravity made

made its way into the minds of their hearers, by the authority of practical conviction. The doctrine of Salvation by grace through faith, with the whole of the Spirit's influence on the understanding and the affections, proved itself by experience to be divine. Hence to the time of James I, Theology, was illustrated by the light of experience; and just at the time when natural knowledge, which had before been buried under the rubbish of idle theories, began to be cultivated with success in the same manner, our Divines, forsaking experience, introduced the theory of mere reasoning into religion, and religious systems were formed, which had no connection with the heart, and would as little bear the test of experience as the old Aristotelian physics would do in philosophy. There is not a more certain sign of the low state of religious knowledge in men of figure and letters among us, than this, that they seem to have no idea of trying the worth of their systems by matter of fact. The good old experimental way of teaching religion has however providentially been revived, and it is my wish to contribute

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my mite towards its farther progress among us. It is scarce credible to those who have not considered it, how men of sense may be imposed on by mere theories. Dr. Burney, in his history of Musick, justly observes, that “ great writers, who discover, in what is “ within their competence, a vigour of mind “ and elevation of genius, which inclines “ mankind to regard them as beings of a “ superior order, whenever they hope by the “ power of thinking to supply the place of “ knowledge, discover an imbecility, which “ degrades them into common characters.” What he has observed in Musick, has its truth also in theology. For it is in this manner that an ingenious and sensible man, but destitute of religious sensibility, may argue himself and others into a belief of doctrinal systems diametrically opposite to the truth of things.—By the power of thinking he may lay down a romantic view of the excellence, dignity, and innocence of human nature, contradicting the whole course of experience, which every where gives testimony to the ignorance, corruption, and misery of man.

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He may paint the wonders of virtue and goodness wrought by the powers of nature, while matter of fact testifies that the Scripture-account is true. "Curst is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." JER. xvii. 5. He may describe the felicity of such men in gay and pleasing colours, while conscience testifies that the picture only exists in imagination.

But let men make use of experience as a guide to facilitate and to confirm their scriptural investigations. The internal sensations of the heart, when once laid open to a man's self, will prove man to be that wretched, blind, and depraved Being which the Word of God describes. A guilty conscience, once felt in all its horrors, will dissipate the dreams of conscious rectitude, and the enjoyment of divine peace attendant on a life of faith in the crucified Saviour will evidence the truth of the doctrine of grace. And well furnished is he with authoritative knowledge to illustrate the Scripture-views of the work of the Holy Ghost, in renewing and purifying human na-

ture, who has felt it himself!!! Even his very falls and errors will be full of instruction for the time to come; the conflicts and temptations attending a life of godliness, who shall describe them like him who has seen real service under the Captain of his salvation? The true way of overcoming sin, and of restoring the man to a state of purity and virtue is learned in the same school; and Scripture and experience continually confirm one another. These are some of the happy fruits of attending to experience in religion. How much better qualified must he be to expound those Scriptures which relate to the essentials of godliness, who has this seal of their truth, than he who proceeds by mere reasoning, by theory and conjecture! What must be thought then of those who exclude all regard to experience from religious lucubrations? who ridicule it as Enthusiasm, and describe religion without the least attention to the heart? Doubtless there can be no earnestness in such religion, no certainty, no solidity. Men in that case will make no other use of Scripture but to quote a few texts to support some preconceived

preconceived Systems. However, by a singular concurrence of circumstances it has happened, that in an age which discards mere theories in all other sciences, and cautiously explores its way in every step by the aid of experiments, in religion alone mere theory is all, and experience is despised as the unenvied portion of visionary fanatics.

But I hope the prospect is clearing up: and experimental religion, carefully distinguished from real fanaticism, and guided by the light of Scripture, may, by the blessing of God, shed its benign influence on the land, and teach us more generally the way to be practically wise and good both here and hereafter.

E S S A Y VIII.

ON THE DOCTRINES OF THE CHURCH OF
ENGLAND.

AS Mr. Ludlam has made some attempts to enlist the Church of England into his service, a few observations will be needful, to state her doctrines in a true light, and to prevent young persons from being ensnared into insincerity in their subscriptions.

The sense of the Articles and Homilies was well understood on all hands in the age in which they were composed and published. To subscribe them in any other sense than the literal, would (then at least) have been reprobated as the height of dishonesty. The system of belief which they inculcate is clear, steady, consistent, and uniform. It has often and abundantly been shewn to be consonant to the Scriptures, and they who simply derived their Creed from the word of God, found nothing hard of digestion in the doctrinal formularies. It was not till men began to dislike the doctrines themselves, that they complained

complained of any obscurity or ambiguity in the Articles and Homilies, and to covet an indulgence of strained interpretation. This is to me a proof, that the difficulties of understanding them, which have been represented in so formidable a light, have their origin entirely from an enmity to the sentiments they convey. This enmity will doubtless create difficulties not only great, but absolutely insuperable, while it remains; and no perspicuity of system or of expression can be the least relief against it.

Archbishop Laud is the first of our English Divines (at least in my remembrance) who pleaded for a liberty of interpretation. Bishop Burnet confesses that it is with difficulty that the conscience is reconciled to subscription in some parts.* But both these men, in their
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* In the Conclusion of his History of his own Times, speaking of the Articles, he says, "The requiring Subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles is a great Impostition. I believe them all myself; but as those about Original Sin and Predestination, might be expressed more unexceptionably, so I think it is a better way to
"let

own views, had deviated from the doctrines of the Church; and it is certain that the Divines of a more early period subscribed more cordially and understood more justly the doctrines of the Articles, than the modern ones do with all the aid which Bishop Burnet's Exposition can give them. Indeed such an exposition seems suspicious in its own nature. If so short a work as the Thirty-nine Articles really needs so long a Comment as that exposition, how confusedly must it have been written! But the truth is, where the doctrine

"let such matters continue to be still the Standard of doctrine, with some few Corrections, and to censure those who teach any contrary Tenets, than to oblige all who serve in the Church to subscribe them. The greater part subscribe without ever examining them (O tempora! O mores!) and others do it, because they must do it, though they can hardly satisfy their consciences about some things in them."—It is remarkable, that we hear of no such complaints made against the hardship of subscriptions in the earlier periods of the Church, at a time too, when great disputes were raised concerning lesser matters. The reason is, the Articles were then really believed.

trine itself is loved, a child may understand them; where it is hated, it is in vain even for the greatest Genius to attempt to accommodate them to his own opinions, and to incorporate them with opposite systems. Hence alone, I believe, has arisen all the difficulty, and the design of Bishop Burnet's laboured Comment to pervert their plain meaning. If I am determined that the Articles shall speak so and so, and if they speak the contrary, all must be jargon and inconsistency. But then the Scripture itself is treated in the same manner; and if what has been said of the propriety and even necessity of understanding the word of God in the *literal* sense be applied to the Articles also, there will be a confutation at once of all Mr. Ludlam's attempts to reconcile his sentiments with those of the Church of England.

It has pleased God to revive a regard to the doctrines of the Reformation in our times. Every one of those Clergymen who understand and love them, cordially assents to the Articles. And they who do not should not attempt to force the Church to speak what she

she does not approve. Mr. Ludlam, writing against the doctrine of satisfaction, (tho' he owns that the word satisfaction occurs in the communion-service and in the 31st Article, and that in the homily of Salvation the doctrine is described) still will have the Church to mean not what *she* says, but what *he* says. Indeed a passage in the homily on the Passion, where sin is described as a debt, conveys so expressly the idea of satisfaction, that he can find nothing else to say than *that such things must be admitted in popular discourses*. What a door is open to deceit and hypocrisy, Scepticism and Ambiguity, when once men allow themselves to interpret writings by rules which militate against *common sense*!

It is not only in the doctrine of satisfaction and justification; in the doctrine of divine Influences he attempts also to wrest the Church-Service to his own opinions. In the 5th Sunday after Easter, we pray that "we may think those things that be good." He makes a frivolous distinction between *good* and *true*, and would thence argue, if his argument be any thing to his purpose, that we
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do not pray to be taught what is truth, or to be enlightened in our understandings. But what do we pray for in another collect? "that we may both perceive and *know* what things we ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same." If this is not a prayer for an illumination of the understanding, as well as for an inclination of the will, it must be because no words are capable of expressing this thought. "Granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting." If knowledge of divine truth be not prayed for here, we may with equal propriety deny, that life everlasting hereafter is prayed for also. But then this is to say, that the eloquent Chrysostom (for from him our Liturgy has borrowed the prayer) did not know how to express his sentiments. In truth, the doctrine of the illumination of the Understanding is much older than the Church of England. Any one acquainted with the Fathers may see it interspersed in their works, and taken for granted continually. They were not so wise in their own eyes as men
have

have learned to be since. In the 2d part of the Homily of the knowledge of the Holy Scripture, the Church quotes the same Chrysostom as affirming, “ that man’s human and
 “ worldly wisdom or science is not needful to
 “ the understanding of Scripture, but the
 “ revelation of the Holy Ghost, who inspireth
 “ the true meaning unto them, that with humi-
 “ lity and diligence do search therefore.”
 If our Reformers had foreseen Mr. Ludlam’s Essay on the Influence of the Holy Ghost, they could not more strongly have guarded against his misrepresentations.

In the 3d part of the Homily for Rogation-week the Church thus speaks, “ Let us meek-
 “ ly call upon that bountiful Spirit, the Holy
 “ Ghost, which proceedeth from our Father
 “ of mercy, and from our Mediator Christ,
 “ that he would assist us and inspire us with
 “ his presence, that in him we may be able
 “ to hear the goodness of God declared unto
 “ us to our Salvation. For without this
 “ lively and secret inspiration, can we not so
 “ much as speak the name of our Mediator,
 “ as St. Paul plainly testifieth: no man can
 “ once

“once name our Lord Jesus Christ, but in
 “the Holy Ghost. Much less should we be
 “able to believe and know these great myste-
 “ries that be opened to us by Christ,” then
 follows a quotation from St. Paul’s 1st
 COR. ii. the Chapter on which I laid so
 peculiar a stress for the proof of this doctrine.*
 The Homily then quotes the 9th Chap. of
 the Book of Wisdom, which though it be not
 the word of God, and the Church carefully
 distinguishes it from the divine Oracles, is yet
 a book of venerable antiquity, breathes much
 of the spirit of piety, and is doubtless an evi-
 dence of the sentiments of the ancient Jewish
 Church at the time in which it was written,
 and the Chapter in question certainly har-
 monizes with St. Paul, and expressly contra-
 dicts the novel opinions which Mr. Ludlam
 seems so fond of cherishing. I might appeal
 further to the Collect for Whit-sunday,
 “Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right
 “Judgment in all things,” and to very many
 parts of the Liturgy. But enough has been

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said

* See Essay IV. Page 70.

said to rescue the sense of the Church from his sophisms ; for his arguments do certainly deserve no better name.

Mr. Ludlam endeavours to evade the force of such express testimonies for the Spirit's illumination, by observing that no more is meant than to pray in general terms for a divine blessing on the means. What can be the meaning of such ambiguous declarations? If this blessing be a real positive influence, it is the very thing he opposes: if it is not, who can say what it is? It seems to be only a ceremonious compliment paid to the Spirit of God, and much resembles the empty form of respect observed in our days by Roman-Catholic princes to the See of Rome, while its real power and influence is denied: a treatment which Antichrist has richly deserved, but very unfit surely to be offered to Jehovah.

Mr. Ludlam seems himself to be dissatisfied with these subterfuges, and has therefore another Apology at hand, that the integrity of Subscription to the Church is perfectly consistent with a disbelief of some little parts of her constitutions: Because one of the Homilies

milies takes notice of the mischief, which we received from the Apple which our great-grandfather Adam tasted, he asks, are we to believe that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was an Apple tree? I believe not; and he might have added no more are we to believe that Adam was our great-grandfather, strictly speaking. The propriety of understanding the Church in a literal sense requires not that we should understand her with such rigid exactness. It is sufficient that she be understood in the sense in which she desires; and I believe no man who is not disposed to cavil will say, that the Reformers meant by the word Apple any thing more than some sort of fruit, and by the word great-grandfather any thing more than our original Ancestor. Will such low sophisms as these justify the hypocrisy of subscribing to Articles of doctrine in a sense quite different from the real one? Sincerity is a jewel in religion. Our Candidates for holy Orders owe Mr. Ludlam no thanks for his attempts to encourage their dissingenuousness. If ever sincerity

be needful it is surely at such a solemn time. Let men subscribe honestly, or not at all.

In truth, I could wish young men who mean to enter into the Church to obtain some acquaintance with the spirit and genius of the Reformers themselves, and not to derive their information concerning them from modern historians, who seem to make it their business to adulterate and misrepresent them, but from their own writings, which are of late too much fallen into disuse and neglect through the proud spirit of the times. Whoever has read Luther's Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, and the many letters of our Reformers to be found in Fox's Book of Martyrs, and understood their real views and spirit, will be convinced, that it is a false candour which labours to reconcile their sentiments with the modern ones which are now in vogue, and that every one of the Reformers would have received Mr. Ludlam's doctrine of the Holy Spirit with indignation, and that there has been a general departure of the Clergy of the established Church from the doctrines of the Reformation.

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Those Clergymen who love the things of this world chiefly, and feel indisposed to renounce the pomps and vanity of this life for the kingdom of heaven's sake, are never willing that the plain contrariety of their doctrines and spirit to those of the Reformation should be exposed. Their inconsistency in eating the bread of a Church which they love not, must be supported by little cavils and sophisms, such as those which have been mentioned. The younger part of the Clergy, who follow such guides, are led into a labyrinth of obscurity: deceit and artifice supply the place of frankness and honesty, and they are brought to espouse opposite opinions at different times, and to feel no pain for their total want of plan, perspicuity, and system. Hence they are naturally led to discharge the whole ministerial function without any zeal at all. *Videri quam esse* malunt. I would guard the younger part of the Clergy against these evils.* The dangerous tendency of Mr. Ludlam's essays with respect to the state of

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* They will understand what they have to guard against more exactly, if they see in a just light the present state

their minds is but too evident. It is by drinking into the spirit of such views that they will lose all zeal for religion, because no truth of any great importance will be left to warm their hearts: and lukewarmness in young Ministers is like avarice in young men, a vice unseasonable, and likely to grow rather than to be checked by age and experience.

ESSAY

state of things in the Church. There was a time, when the very doctrines of justification and regeneration could scarce be endured in any sense or in any degree. But truth has now so far prevailed, that many, who are far from being cordially serious in religion, will now own these doctrines in some loose general manner. Some out-works of opposition are given up, as no longer tenable, and they retreat into the Citadel of self-sufficiency, with a determination to defend it to the last extremity. The illumination of the Holy Ghost—this they still withstand with all their Might. Their own reason is to supply its place. Alas! while they remain in this frame, nothing to any purpose is done for their souls. If serious young Candidates for Orders exactly understand the present posture of affairs, they will feel it their duty particularly to reverence the Holy Ghost in this his essential office of teaching the heart, and to implore it continually for themselves, that by experience they may be strengthened against fashionable delusions, and be able to say, that “they do trust they are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost.” See the Ordination-Service of the Church.

E S S A Y IX.

REMARKS ON THE HISTORY OF RELIGION.

IF the view which has been given of the nature, reality, and importance of spiritual religion be scripturally just and sound, it must have a great influence on our judgment with respect to the history of religion, and will prove the extreme fallacy of popular opinions on that subject, as well as the essential defectiveness of the most admired of our Ecclesiastical Historians.

It seems to be commonly believed that there is a natural and gradual progression in religious knowledge, as in all human arts and sciences; that each age must necessarily be wiser than that which preceded it; that the *Æra* of the reformation was only the infancy of theology; that great improvements were made by the Divines of the 17th Century, but that the eighteenth Century bids fair for advancing the science to perfection, on account of the labours of certain ingenious and philosophical

philosophical persons, who hope to emancipate it from the fetters of scholastic jargon, and fix it on the solid foundation of reason and truth.

That there is such a gradual improvement in natural science is certain, and so long as the lights of experience are cultivated with diligence, the effects will be unquestionably greater and greater. But we have seen that the very contrary method has been adopted in Divinity. Every thing experimental is there rejected, and a mere baseless Theory introduced and applauded. And in truth the neglect of experimental religion among those very persons who are thought so capable of promoting christian religion is palpable. They despise it altogether and call it Enthusiasm. Nor is this all: the success of religion does not ultimately depend on human powers and resources; the influence of the Holy Spirit is the great cause in this subject: as that is poured out or withheld, Religion will prosper or decay. This consideration puts a new face on the whole subject. There can be no experimental religion without his influence; and without experience there can be no salutary

tary knowledge of religion. An historian of religion should then attend to the remarkable seasons of these Effusions of the Spirit of God. It is in them that the lustre, power, and energy of Christianity appears. Hence the genuine nature and effects of true religion may be estimated with sufficient accuracy; the degree of the declensions of other periods may be measured, and the quantity of sound religion, which though sullied and almost absorpt, may yet retain a faint and glimmering existence in those periods, may be ascertained.

The decay of religion is indeed naturally gradual, because it depends on the perverse operations of the human mind, and that connection of causes and effects, which may be accounted for from general principles. The *flesh* is our own, is evil altogether, and naturally proceeds from bad to worse, if untrouled and left at large to its own malignity. The Spirit is* not our own, like the wind,
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* In GAL. vi. 8. St. Paul uses the expression, *his flesh, the spirit*.

his emblem, he blows where he listeth, and in a moment produces the most mighty effects, loves oft to operate the deepest, when human wickedness and misery are at the greatest height, and this too by ways and means most mysterious to man, and the most opposite that can be conceived to the plans of those who would weigh religious improvements in the scales of common reason only.

In describing the seasons of the victorious influence of grace, the historian has no room to exercise his own sagacity. *The Lord hath done it. This is the day which the Lord hath made: we will be glad and rejoice in it.* This is all the account which can be given. He is only faithfully to report the facts, and shew the agreement of them with Scripture, that the reader may judge for himself, whether *the hand of the Lord hath done this, and whether the Holy One of Israel hath created it.* In speaking of the declensions there is more room for human ingenuity; the subject is unhappily but too much on a level with the understanding of man; tho' even here his eye must be kept on the models of Christian truth and goodness

goodness exhibited in the purest seasons, that he may form a proper estimate of those which are contrasted with them. I scarce need to add, that above all he should regulate his views by the word of God, and if ever he undertake to criticise on the faults which he relates, he should always bring them to that unerring touchstone. But a faithful narrative of the faults themselves is his indispensable duty. The history of the church is properly nothing else than a history of the effusions of the Spirit of God, and of the effects which they produce in the world. I use the word Effusion: it is not fashionable in this sense; but to believe the thing itself is not fashionable in our days, and I include in its idea not only the remarkable instances which occur in history, but all the instances of it in every age.

A just estimate of these things would be to give an history of real good men. *Mosheim's* Review is little else than an account of the bad men in the Church: it is a merely secular history: as such, no doubt very judicious, tho' too much partaking of the common fault
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of all modern history, too full of reflections, too sparing in facts, more entertaining on that account, but much less worthy of confidence.

A Church-history formed on the plan I have mentioned, is doubtless a great desideratum. For want of it young Divines are often made the sport of crafty men, who lie in wait to deceive. The whole torrent of the present age runs strongly in favour of itself, and in contempt of all those that preceded it. Fashionable books, aided by the whole farrago of temporary publications, are ever declaiming against Enthusiasm; and under that pretence, the influence of the Spirit is hissed out of the polite and literary world. They who see and feel for the cause of God and his Christ and the true interests of men, may lament, may grieve, and may pray against these evils. God alone can help effectually, and in his due time he doubtless will appear again for his Church, and will make truth in the end to be victorious.

But men who love the Lord Jesus and the prosperity of his church, should bestir themselves to do a little according to their respective abilities:

abilities: even a little will not be in vain, and no well-meant attempt will be unrewarded. An acquaintance with former seasons of gracious and divine operation must be of unspeakable advantage to Ministers, and enable them to stand their ground more powerfully against modern seduction and self-conceit. The lights, which in general they may obtain from popular histories, will deceive more than inform. I have been astonished myself to find what different men *Luther, Melancthon, Calvin*, and various other renowned Champions of divine truth were, after I had examined their private lives or their own writings, from the opinion which the most celebrated historians of the present day would induce one to form of them.

There are materials indeed in abundance for such a history interspersed in various accounts since the beginning of the Reformation. The great difficulty would be to find them in the dark Popish Ages. Very small indeed, and sometimes in a manner nothing at all, appears the light of true religion for a number of centuries. Not but that Christ

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ever had a true Church; and there are faint marks of it perpetually. But the materials are often very mean and confused, and the difficulty of finding them is sometimes almost inconceivable. But this is not the most discouraging part of the subject. Who would regard such an history? the views of it are diametrically opposite to the genius of the times, and almost all the learning and genius in the land would either be malevolently employed against it; to stifle it in its birth, or on hearing it announced with derision by the monthly harbingers of books, neglect it with silent contempt.

On these accounts, and also from great want of leisure, I am far from pledging myself to the public for the performance of a work, which I should long to see executed by some person, whose literary eminence or official dignity might secure him such an hearing as my obscurity and littleness cannot expect, and whose learning, judgment, piety, and leisure might capacitate him for it. That I have had some distant thoughts of it myself, I mean not to dissemble, especially if no one
else

else undertake it. At any rate, the mention of these hints may not be unseasonable.

To illustrate a little what has been advanced of the remarkable effusions of the Spirit of God, it may not be amiss in a cursory way to mention a few of them. This may be no improper conclusion of the review of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

I. The first both in importance and in purity is doubtless that which is recorded by the inspired pen of St. *Luke* in the Acts of the Apostles. That judicious and elegant historian (for that surely is his character, if we view him in a mere human light) informs us, that at the very time when the *Jewish* nation was sunk in the very dregs of wickedness, hypocrisy, and blindness, the Spirit of God was so gloriously poured out at *Jerusalem*, that 3000 were turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, under one single sermon; that multitudes were daily added to the Church; that Christians were then of one heart and of one soul, were more remarkably abstracted from the love of this world than was ever known

to be the case of mortals in any age before or since, simply devoted themselves to the service of God, lived for eternity, and not for the things of time and sense, and with a charity superior to all injuries, and a patience superior to all sufferings, waited for the second coming of their Lord in a course of piety, uprightness, and virtue, which at once amazed and provoked all the rest of mankind. He informs us farther of the continuation and diffusion of the same glorious work throughout the Roman Empire, and its wonderful success wherever it appeared. The blessed effects of this effusion remain with us to this day, and the history which records it, is the proper unerring standard of historical Christianity.*

* It is with pleasure I here acknowledge the obligation which all lovers of real Christianity are under to the Rev. Mr. Newton for his excellent Review of Ecclesiastical history, which has judiciously illustrated this first period. Whoever reads it with attention, will see an exemplification of the subject before us for the first Century of Christianity. But nearly seventeen Centuries since have yet found no *real* Ecclesiastical Historian.

II. Human

II. Human and diabolical malignity laboured gradually to pervert and abuse this work till the latter end of the 4th Century, when *Pelagius*, the first of all men who called themselves Christians, denied *original Sin* and the influences of the Holy Ghost entirely. Lower than this Christianity scarce could fall in the world. But it pleased God to raise up *Augustine*, Bishop of Hippo, to withstand this pestilence which was fast spreading in the Church, to check and lessen very much its influence in the world, and to unfold to men the operations of divine grace in a deeper and more vigorous manner than any writer since the days of Clement and Ignatius. This was not a brilliant, but a solid period of illumination in the church. The best accounts of it are to be met with in *Augustine's* own writings; of him Dr. *Mosheim* is pleased to say, that there is an appearance of ambiguity in his writings, which has sometimes rendered the most attentive readers uncertain with respect to his real sentiments. I have been astonished to find that he really was the most steady, uniform, and consistent writer in

the world, every where the same, in general at least, and remarkable for a simplicity in his system, which scarce ever forsakes him. The effects of this illumination continued even to the days of *Luther*; and in every age, during a very long and disastrous period, the works of *Augustine* were a blessing to many individuals.

III. The period of the Reformation was most glorious indeed; and we have abundant testimonies of the most surprising changes effected on the hearts, understandings, and lives of vast numbers, within a very small compass of time, many of whom seem little, if at all, inferior on the whole in piety and virtue to the primitive Christians. The effects of the Reformation were most astonishing; but the decay was speedy.

IV. The revival of the Reformation in our land, at this day, forms the last effusion of the Spirit of God, which I shall mention. Let not the Reader suppose I mean to insinuate, that these four have been the only remarkable ones. There have been many in different ages. But these four are very distinguished ones. A circumstance peculiarly attendant on

on that, in the midst of which we live at present, is the weakness and obscurity of the instruments by which it has been wrought. I question whether human learning and sagacity were ever less employed in religious work, since the Apostles' days. It should be an instructive lesson to the learned and the wise of this kingdom, that while they have scarce contributed any thing, persons of lower rank and attainments have been instrumental in reclaiming and enlightening thousands. What a check should this be to the darling sin of the age, the pride of self-sufficiency! There are symptoms indeed among us of enthusiasm, but still more threatening symptoms of reasoning pride. *They* may mingle their influence to mar the present happy appearances. But the Head of the Church knows what he has to do, and happy is every one who submits to be an infant in his School all the days of his pilgrimage.

F I N I S.

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